mus. viii

Kitab Mahal Series of English Literature

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME & THE STUDY OF POETRY

Introduction, Text, Summary
Notes & Explanations, Questions & Answers

BY
Prof. Bashir Ahmad M.A.
&
Masood Ali Khan M.A., LL.B.

12

Price :- 4/-

KITAB MAHAL
Educational Publishers
URDU BAZAR, LAHORE (W. Pak)

Kitab Mahal Series of English Literature

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME & THE STUDY OF POETRY

Introduction, Text, Summary
Notes & Explanation, Questions & Answers

BY
Prof. Bashir Ahmad M.A.
&
Masood Ali Khan M.A., LL.B.

KITAB MAHAL
Educational Publishers
URDU BAZAR, LAHORE (W. Pak)

CONTENTS

Published by Shakoor Mohammad Manager Kitab Mahal &
Printed by Mohammad Yaqub at New Kamran Printers
o/s. Mori Gate, Lahore

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1822—1888

Life and Works

Matthew Arnold, son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby, was born at Laleham, on December 24, 1822, and educated at Rugby, Winchester and Balliol College, Oxford. He became a fellow of Oriel in 1845. Thereafter he was private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, Lord President of the Council, through whose influence he was in 1851 appointed an Inspector of Schools.

His first book of poetry, *The Strayed Reveller*, came out in 1849, but it was soon withdrawn. Some of the poems, however, including *Mycerinus* and *The Forsaken Merman* were later republished. *Empedocles on Etna* (1852) with *Tristram and Iseult*, was similarly withdrawn.

In 1857 he was appointed to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, which he held for ten years. After this he produced little poetry, and devoted himself to criticism and theology.

His principal writings are, in poetry, *Poems* (1853). containing *Sohrab and Rustam*, and *The Scholer Gipsy* ; *Poems, 2nd Series* (1855) containing *Balder Dead*, *Merope* (1858) ; *New poems* (1867), containing *Thyrsis*, an elegy on A. H. Clough *A Southern Night*, *Rugby Chapel*, and *The Weary Titan*. In prose he wrote *On Translating Homer* (1861 and 1862), *Essays in Criticism* (1865), *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), *2nd Series* (1888) ; *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) ; *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870) ; *Friendship's Garland* (1871), *Literature and Dogma* (1873) ; *God and the Bible* (1876) ; *Last Essays on Church and*

Religion (1877) ; Mixed Essans (1879) ; Irish Essays (1882), and *Discourses on America* (188ↄ).

He also wrote some works on the state of education on the Continent. In 1883 he received a pension of 250 pounds. He died at liverpool, on April 15, 1888, and was buried at Laleham-on-Thames. He undoubtedly exercised a stimulating influence on his time, though the rationalistic tendency of certain of his writings gave offence to many readers. Finest culture, high purpose, sincerity, and a style of great distinction characterize his writings. Much of his poetry has an exquisite and subtle beauty though it has been doubted that the true poetic fire has not sometimes been chilled by high culture and wide knowledge of poetry.

As a Poet

The review of his poetry need not detain us long, for we are here concerned with M. Arnold as a critic. He practically stopped writing poetry after 1867. Henceforth he appeared in the role of a critic. Thousands of readers who were little attracted to *Empedocles* or *Balder*, read with delight his *Essays in Criticism*, and *Culture and Anarchy*. In his poetry too we find the critic uppermost, formulating at last his famous but much disputed definition of poetry as 'a criticism of life'.

His first volume, *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems* (1849) ; and latter *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*, cannot be said to have made much impression. *The Strayed Reveller* which depicts the doings of men as envisaged by the gods, is yet a delightful poem. In other poems already appear "the weariness, the fever, and the fret", a recurring note in Arnold's poetry. The times seem to be out of joint—and to set them right is a task beyond the poet. Writing of Wordsworth in 1850 he alludes to, "iron time of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears". A Stoic patience and endurance are suggested ; life can be made endurable by 'drugging pain with patience'.

Stopford A. Brooke rightly says : "He had insight into the evils, the dullness, the follies, the decay and death of the time at which he wrote but he had little insight into its good into the hopes and ideas which were arising in its darkness, or the life which was collecting itself together under its decay. His temper, therefore, was not joyous, nor was it in sympathy with the temper of the whirling but formative time in which he began and continued to writepoetry."

His poetry does indeed express a dissatisfaction with the age in which with the advance of science, old faith was crumbling away, and for sensitive souls like Arnold there was nothing to stay-by. There are melancholy and disillusion in his poetry. His poetry is not, at any rate, the poetry of youth. We find in it the fixed, steady, gloom of November. We may detect some strain too—his poetry does not flow freely and spontaneously, but struggles into the quintessential expression of sadness. Self-restraint and moderation which we admire so much in his prose, are a handicap to his poetry. It is all a "sad lucidity of soul."

In 1858 a new edition of the poems appeared, and from it *Empedocles* was omitted. It is interesting to read the preface in which he explains the reason of the omission—and here again we see how the *critic* is getting the upper hand of the *poet* : "I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus, having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun to change...........the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity, have disappeared ; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced ; modern problems have presented themselves ; we hear already of the doubts, we witness the discouragement of Hamlet and of Faust..................Any accurate representation (of such a man's feelings) may therefore be expected to be interesting ; but if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded not only that it shall interest, bnt also that it shall inspirit and

rejoice the reader : that it shall convey a charm and infuse delight. 'For the Muses,' as Hesiod says, 'were born that they might be a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares' ; and it is not enough that the poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness." Arnold doubted whether he had fulfilled this ideal. That was the reason why *Empedocles* was omitted. At the request of Browning it was later included in the collected edition of his poems.

The preface deserves a detailed study for in it he propounds his principles of criticism. He writes : "What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations and at all times ? They are actions, human actions, possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the Poet............What actions are the most excellent ? Those certainly which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections, to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race and which are independent of time............To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting ; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido—what modern poem personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an "exhausted past" ?............I fearlessly assert that *Hermann and Dorothea*, *Childe Harold*, *Jocelyn*, *The Excursion* leave the reader cold in comparison with effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Ilaid*, by the *Oresta*, by the episode of Dido. And why is this ? Simply because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense ; and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.........It has been said that I wish to iimit the poet in his choice of subjects to Greek and Roman antiquity, but it is not so, I only counsel him to choose for his subjects great actions, without regarding to what time they belong.

M. Arnold wrote *Sohrab and Rustam*, which appeared in the 1853 volume. according to these principles. It is

anold Eastern story, but treated with great dignity and restraint, with manly pathos and fine discrimination in character, it acquires a new significance. There is little of the ache and weariness which afflicts other poems. The poem is written in the Homeric spirit. Broad objective outlook, infiltration of human sympathies, stateliness of manner, sense of balance and proportion throughout the poem, lift the story to a high classical standard. The theme is romantic, but the treatment is classical.

M. Arnold does not seem to have been satisfied with his *Balder*—a poem inspite of its lyrical effusion rather too long and, therefore, less interesting. He writes, "*Balder* perhaps no one cares much for except myself............I consider that it has a natural *propriety* of diction and rhythm which is what we prize so much in Virgil, and which is not common in English poetry...............We have enough Scandinavianism in our nature to make a short *conspectus* of the Scandinavian mythology admissible." Yes, the poem is a conspectus of Scandinavian mythology. But there is doubt whether M. Arnold has been able to enter into the true Scandinavian spirit, his classical bias or turn of mind intervening. The saga spirit—the barbarous delight in blood and battle, the fierce loves and hates—must have been alien to Arnold.

Arnold is decidedly at his best in his elegiac poems—*The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*, written after the manner of Milton's *Lycidas*. These poems are marked by tenderness and charm—and they are penetrated by the beauty of 'that sweet city with her dreaming spires. They contain also lovely little trans cripts of natural thing :

So have I heard the Cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vast garden trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze.

In his elegiac poems the poet now and then embodies literary criticism. In the *Lines on the Author of Obermann* be thus contrasts Wordsworth and Goethe:

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate;
And Goethe's course few sons of men.
May think to emulate.
For he pursued a lonely road
His eyes on Nature's plan.
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

He writes thus of Byron in the *Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse* :

What helps it now that Byron bore.
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
Through Europe to the Aetolian shore.
The pageant of his bleeding heart?

M. Arnold was a great admirer of Wordsworth and sometimes there are echoes of Wordsworth in his nature poetry ; yet he differs from Wordsworth in his conception of Nature, which is more consistent with the progress in science in his age, and which, as in Wordsworth, has little to do with the spiritualizing of Nature. Stopford A. Brooke writes, "He describes the thing he sees, flower or bird, stream or hill, exactly as they are, without humanizing them, without veiling them with any sentiment of their own, without, having concerning them any philosophy that spiritualizes Nature as the form of thought or love, any belief that she is alive or dwelt in by living beings. Nature to Arnold is frequently the nature that modern science has revealed to us —matter in motion taking an inconceivable variety of form but always in its variety acting rigidly according to certain ways, which, for want of a wiser term, we call laws. For the first time this view of Nature enters into English poetry with Arnold. He sees the loveliness of her doing, but he also sees their terror and dreadfulness and their relentlessness. But whatin his poetry he chiefly sees is the peace of Nature's obedience to law—the everlasting youth of her unchanging life." Compare:

We, O Nature, depart,
Thou survivest us : this,
This, I know, is the law.
Yes, but more than this,
Thou who seest us die
Seest us change while we live;
Seest our dreams one by one,
Seest our errors depart ;
Watchest us, Nature, throughout,
Mild and inscrutably calm.

We may sum up in the words of A.T. Quiller-Couch: "He leaves the impression that he wrote with difficulty; his raptures, though he knew raptures, are infrequent. But through all his work there runs a strain of serious elevated thought,and on it all there rests an air of composure equally serious and elevated—a trifle statuesque, perhaps, but by no means deficient in feeling. No one read, say, the closing lines of *Mycerinus* and fail to perceive these qualities— Nor, we think, can any one study the poetry of 1850 and thereabouts without being forced to admit that it wanted these qualities of thought fulness and composure."

As a Critic

M. Arnold writes, "It is because criticism has so little kept in the pure intellectual sphere, has so little detached itself from practice. has been so directly polemical and controversial, that it has so ill-accomplished ; in this country its best spiritual work ; which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarising, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself abolute beauty and fitness of things," He takes evidently the business of a critic very conscientiously, and states the function as well as the aim of criticism. Criticism should be kept on the intellectual plane, and made free of any extraneous considerations. Detachment or disinterestedness is the quality to be cultivated by a critic. And so he can dwell upon what is

excellent in itself and reveal to us the beauty and fitness of things, and cure us of self-satisfaction. All this presumes exquisite perception and sensibility, a balanced judgment and a literary conscience on the part of acritic.

In *Culture and Anarchy* he recommends culture "as the great help out of our present difficulties," defining it as "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know on all matters which most concern us the best that has been thought and said in the world." By such knowledge we can turn "a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically." Culture' here seems to be identical with criticism. The function of criticism, as he conceives it, is to make us acquainted with the best that has been thought and said in this world; it is to turn a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits. When he demands that a critic should make known the best that has been thought and said in the world, he means that a critic should have a broad outlook, and be familiar with the thought currents of the world. Arnold makes broad-based culture the main spring of criticism. This is pointed out by G. K. Chesterton : "He had a consciousness of Europe much fuller and firmer than that of any of the great men of his great epoch. For instance, he admired the Germans too much as Carlyle admired the Germans too much. But he was not deluded by any separatist follies about the superiority of a Teutonic race. If he admired the Germans it was for being European, signally and splendidly European. He did not, like Carlyle, admire the Germans for being German. Like Carlyle, he relied much on the sagacity of Goethe. But the sagacity of Goethe upon which he relied was not a rugged or cloudy sagacity, the German element in Goethe. It was the Greek element in Goethe, a lucid and equalised sagacity, a moderation and a calm such as Carlyle could not have admired, nay, could not even have imagined.

"A moderation and a calm"—that is what we discover in Arnold's critical assessment. He puts the essential quality of criticism to be disinterestedness. By disinterestedness he means "a free play of the mind on all subjects which

it touches," and exclusion of "those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them' which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently ; but criticism has really nothing to do with them."

He bases his critical principles on his study of Greek literature. Greek objectivity, Greek sanity, Greek sense of balance and proportion—all find expression in his criticism. W. B. Worsfold writes: "Matthew Arnold finds a starting point for his criticism in his knowledge of the literature of ancient Greece........." And he subsequently finds another starting-point in his knowledge of continental literature. In this way he approches the study of English literature from two separate points ofv iew, and finally he acquires that independence, that detachment from local and historical interests, which is the crowning merit of a critic.'

The point will be made still clearer if we quote again G K Chesterton: "He saw and very rightly asserted that the fault of the Mid Victorian English was that they did not seem to have any sense of difinite excellence. Nothing could be better than the way in which he points out in the very important essay on "The function of Criticism at the Present Time" that the French admit into intellectual problems the same principle of clearly stated and generally admitted dogmas, which all of us in our daily lives admit into moral problems." The French, as he puts it in a good summarising phrase, have a conscience in literary matters ; upon the opposite English evil he poured perpetual satire." It is the vulgar and indiscriminate acceptance of the banal and commonplace by the English, which Arnold assails again and again. This is what he means by *Philistinism.*

So Arnold laid down certain definite principles of criticism. "Mr. Arnold did not merely criticise books himself. He taught others how to criticise them. He laid down principles if he did not always keep the principles he laid down. Nobody, after reading *Essays in Criticism*, has any excuse for not being a critic"—writes H. W. Paul. In

the age of Dryden the only authority quoted was Aristotle. Now Arnold began to exercise a tremendous influence in the sphere of literary criticism—and he began to be quoted in place of Aristotle. It may be pointed out that Arnold's scope was larger. To Aristotle the claims of Greece were the only literary models available ; Arnold had continental literature to range through, if he limited himself only to "the best that has been known and thought in the world," Secondly, Arnold directs his attention to a phase of criticism that did not concern Aristotle. Aristotle shows the critic in relation to art : Arnold, the critic in relation to the public. The difference is this : Aristotle formulates the principles which govern the making of a poem ; Arnold, the principles by which the best poems can be tested and examined. Arnold owes a duty to society. The task of criticism for Arnold was to prepare a social atmosphere—to make known to the public the best that is known and thought in the world. It has to do with the problem of "prefection" or "how to live." In *Culture and Anarchy* he is mostly concerned with the relation of the critic of literature to the society in which he lives. He started with the examination of the principles of art and then came to this stage. In the beginning, as we have noted above, he did not keep the critic and the poet as under.

When Arnold put all emphasis on the choice of an excellent action as the groundwork of a poem, he followed but in the footsteps of Aristotle. He rejected *Empedocles* because the choice of the subject was not a good one The situation in *Empedocles* was painful without being tragic. While demanding that the action should be presented in an interesting manner by the art of the poet which means that art should be made to yield the highest enjoyment, he develops the theme further by his analysis of the grand style is one of his lectures on Homer and his insistence on 'high seriousness' which is the mark of great poetry.

The enunciation of these principles precluded him from thinking that his own age, the age of industrial development, could really afford genuine themes for poetry. He

says that art is a "criticism of life." Speaking of *Anna Karenine*, he says that we should take it "as a piece of life", not "as a work of art," the novel gaining in reality what it loses in art. Here he lands himself on contradiction if his definition of art as a criticism of life is to be taken seriously. Again, he mentions simplicity and severity as the qualities of the grand style. Does it mean that art can have nothing to do with the complex, or that it should shun the age of material progress? R.A. Scott-James writes, "His faith in the guidance of pre-eminent models, inspiring as they may be, tended to hide from him the potential excellence of the new and untired, of the fresh material from which new art forms and adaptations, of the old are forever being evolved." We mention here, by the way, the limitations of Arnold as a critic.

We may now examine in detail his principles of criticism. "A disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas"—this he conceives to be the task of critic. How can he fulfil this task? First, the critic must "see things as they really are." Secondly, he should pass on his ideas to others—his aim being to "make the best ideas prevail." Thirdly, he prepares an atmosphere favourable to the creative genius of future—and thus he releases "a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power." The function of a critic then is to promote "culture." In *Culture and Anarchy* he analyses the duty of a critic pre-eminently as a man of culture, concerned with all aspects of living. Culture, according to him is a study of perfection, which manifests itself in "the moral and social passion for doing good." The man of culture is, therefore, concerned not only with seeing and knowing truth, but with making it prevail.

What he exactly means by *disinterestedness* needs to be carefully investigated. It is true that a critic should cultivate an unbiassed, independent, objective outlook— should have no axe to grind as one might say. But Arnold also had something mere in mind. We have to recall here his

classaification of the British people—the *Barbarians i.e* , the aristocrat who is accomplished in "spirit and politeness" but "inaccessible to ideas and light ;" the bawling, hustling, smashing and bear-drinking *Populace* ; the *Philistines*—the complacent middle classes with whom the world is too much' and who lay waste their powers, getting and spending. He wishes that the critic should not let himself be swayed by their ideas and prejudices. *Philstinism* is the antithesis of culture. In his essays oe Heine he states the position clearly: "the enthusiast for the idea, the reason, the idea in and for themselves ; he values them' irrespectively of the practical convenience which their triumph may obtain for him ; and the man who regards the possession of these practical conveniences as something sufficient in itself, something which compensates for the absence or surrender of the idea of reason, is, in his eyes a Philistine." It is the ideal of intellectual and spiritual excellence which he that consistently upholds, and it is in accord with the best has been known and thought in the world.

Now the point is that while he emancipates the critic from some degrading prepossessions—from interests that are intellectually unacceptable, he binds him down to "the moral and social passion for doing good." It is not the kind of disinterestedness that we demand of an artist and a critic. Behind Arnold's ideas of perfection is some moral prepossession ; the disinterestedness which he recommends as the essential of a critic is of a kind. R. A. Scott-James points out what this disinterestedness should be : "When I say that the activity of the artist is disinterested, I do not mean that he may not be concerned with any conceivable theme under the sun, but that his business is to provide us with an experience, and that any end he may have beyond making that experience vivid and complete is an alien end, destroying his singleness of purpose wholly disruptive of his art and destructive to its energy." Arnold makes art and criticism subservient to "the moral and social passion for doing good."

Another point needs to be considered here. Arnold seems to put the claims rather too high for the critic. He

thinks that the potential poet is waiting, sterile, till the ground is prepared for him by the professional critic. The critic is a John the Baptist. "The elements with which creative power works are ideas ; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time." And it is the business of the critic to make these ideas available to the creative artist ; the creative artist's work is one of "synthesis and exposition". A great artist, say, one like Shakespeare, does not owe so much to a critic as Arnold makes him out to.

Lastly, how to discover the best. It concerns the duty of the critic to literature. Arnold suggests a practical method. In *The Study of Poetry* he writes, "Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes characteristics of a quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples ;— to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest quality, and to say : "The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*." He recommends a "real estimate" as distinguished from the "historic estimate" and "personal estimate", which he discourages. By such a means we shall learn to enjoy the best work of the real classic and appreciate the wide difference between it and all lesser work. He points out that the high qualities lie both in the matter and substance of poetry and in the manner and style. To discover the best, we must then study and fix in our mind the lives and expressions of great masters, and apply them "as a touchstone to other poetry". This is indeed a very practical method. Longinus suggested a similar practical test. There are passages, he says, in which we may recognise "the beauty and truth of the sublime" because they "always please and please all (fastidious) readers... ......and take so strong a hold on the memory that they cannot be forgotten."

Arnold quotes memorable lines of verses from great poets, English and classical—Shakespeare, Milton, Homer, Dante. But how can a reader make sure that he does not err in his choice of the high quality of verse ? M. Arnold quotes the following from Milton.

And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is else not to be overcome.

The poetic quality of these lines is not very high ; the moral may be noble one. Here we see how Arnold's moral prepossession—his obsession with "the moral and social passion for doing good"—warps his judgment. R.A. Scott-James comments : "Does not the choice of this passage reveal just the danger to which Arnold exposed himself when he set up an ideal of perfection too much associated with the problem of how to live?".........he has handicapped his own judgment by making it the servant of pre-conceived standards of excellence which are as much moral as aesthetic. This bias in Arnold's artistic make-up from time to time conflicts with a purely disinterested judgment." His ideal of intellectual and spiritual excellence interferes with his disinterestedness.

If we are to discover the test of great poetry in memorable lines and passages, what about the 'total-impression' of which Arnold speaks ? Are we to judge a poem by its memorable lines, or by its organic unity, by the totality of impression ? The total effect—should count more than memorable passages. The comparative method, suggested by Arnold, may be an effective one, but we cannot rest on isolated passages, and should compare the whole impression of one work with that of a recognised masterpiece. This does not seem to have been emphasized by Arnold.

Then we cannot totally ignore the personal estimate. There is of course the risk that we may be tempted by "our personal affinities, likings and circumstances" to attach greater importance to a work of art than it deserves or than a detached critic would attach to it. But a work of art may mean much to us personally—and we may find the utmost that is really in it. A sense of intimate personal relationship with an author often helps us to a better understnding and a correct valuation of his work. Sainte- Beuve used to take pains to know all that could be known about the life and circumstances of a man of letters. He would not

attempt to define a work until he had formed a personal estimate of its author.

M. Arnold's Literary Judgments and their Application

We have examined above Arnold's critical principles and pointed out a few of their shortcomings. He did not see much of promise in his own age. It might be an era of progress, destined to carry out the great ideas of industrisl development and amelioration. But it was an age, as he thougnt, "wanting in moral grandeur" and therefore it was not one to supply the necessary incentive to the production of great poety. The intellectual and spiritual atmosphere which is necessary to call forth the creativity ativity was wanting. He depicts the age in *The Scholar Gipsy* – an age of "mental strife", "sick hurry", and "divided aims". We may not deny that there was "mental strife" in the age, a break-up of old faith and tradition, due to the progress of sceince, and industrial development. The intellectual unrest of the age is reflected in Tennyson too, while Browning seems to have shirked it. It seems to have stricken Arnold's poetry with a sort of palsy, and in it we find much of "sick fatigue" and "languid doubt". And as a critic (when he finally abandoned writing verse) he made it his business to propagate fresh and free ideas—and they had their effect too upon his contemporaries, he in fact, sought to generate an intellectual and spiritual atmsophere in which literary genius can be active. The truth is that he seems to have been carried away by his "moral andsocial passion for doing good", and blinked at the out-burst of great poetic literature, which included, together with his own work, that of Tennyson, Browning. D. G. Rossetti, Swinburne, William Morris, and George Meredith.

He was really in despair about his own age. He writes, "The epochs of Aeschylus and Shakespeare make us feel their preeminence. In an epoch like those there is, no doubt, the true life of literature ; there is the promised land, towards which criticism can only beckon. That promised land, it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness ; but to have desired to enter it, to have selected

it from afar is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity." He had a very fastidious taste, and nothing could have satisfied him after he had let his intellectual appetite, be nourished by Greek poetry and Greek art of criticism. He draws a distinction between Greek and modern poetry, but traces the modern spirit back to Greek poetry. He says, "............... the main element of the modern spirit's life is neither the senses and understanding, nor the heart and imagination; it is the imaginative reason." Of the Greek poets he writes; "No other poets have lived so much by the imaginative reason; no other poets have made their work so well-balanced; no other poets so well satisfied the thinking power have so well satisfied the religious sense." And he explains why there had been no similar achievement in England "We, in England, in our great burst of literature during the first thirty years of the present century, had no manifestation of the modern spirit, as this spirit manifests itself in Goethe's works or Heine's And thereason is not far to seek. We had neither the German wealth of ideas, nor the French enthusiasm for applying ideas. There reigned in the mass of nation that inveterate inaccessibility in ideas, that Philistinism—to use theGerman nick-name—which reacts even on the individual genius that is exempt from it."

He distinguishes the modern spirit by the imaginative reason. He says that Byron and Shelley "did not succeed in their attempt freely to apply the modern spirit in English literature." He means that they could not identify themselves the life of the epoch, because the resistance to baffle them, the want of intelligent sympathy to guide and uphold them were too great." It is not then so much a matter of Byron and Shelley being unable to bring themselves into harmony with the *Zeitgeist* or time spirit as of the latter being antagonistic to them. This identification of the poet with the life of his epoch as Arnold thinks was perfectly achieved in the epochs of Aeschylus and Shakespear. He writes, "In the Greece of Pindar and Spholes, in the England of Shakespeare, the poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the

creative power ; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive". It is the question of *man* and the *moment* fitting together. W. B. Worsfold expounds it quite clearly : "Matthew Arnold exhibits the essential connection between the artist and his age—which corresponds to the scientific analysis of a thinking man into the 'organism' and the 'social medium'—in two ways. In the first place, to form a great epoch of literature the power of the man and the power of the moment must be present in conjunction ; and in the second, either of these powers alone and by itself produces his failure, that is, partial success."

Applying this test of the artist and his age being assimilated to each other and brought closest together, Arnold finds that though Wordsworth, Scott, and Keats have left admirable works, far more solid and complete than those of Byron and Shelley, their works from but minor currents—"they do not belong to that which is the main current of the literature of modern epochs, they do not apply modern ideas to life." The artist and the age must meet half way. Sometimes, the age lags behind, or is antagonistic, and the artist is baffled, and fails to fulfil his promise. Arnold tells us why great creative epochs in literature are so rare? "For the creation of master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment." Byron half fulfiled his promise because British Philistinism was his most formidable enemy. "Look at Byron, that Byron whom the present generation of Englishmen are forgetting ; Byron, the greatest natural force, the greatest elementary power, I cannot but think," which has appeared in our literature since Shakespeare. And what became of this wonderful production of nature ? He shattered himself, he inevitably shattered himself to pieces against the huge, black, cloud topped, interminable precipice of British Philistinism." Gray was a highly gifted poet, but his Production was so scanty because the age was uncongenial to him—it was an age of prose. "Gray, with the qualities of mind and soul of a genuine poet, was isolated in the century. Maintaining and fortifying them by lofty

studies, he yet could not fully educe and enjoy them; the want of genial atmosphere, the failure of sympathy in his contemporaries, were too great. Born in the same year with Milton, Gray would have been another man; born in the same year with Burns, he would have been another man. A man born in 1608 could profit by the larger and more poetic scope of the English spirit in the Elizabethan age; a man born in 1759 could profit by that European renewing of men's minds of which the great historical manifestation is the French Revolution."

We have recorded Arnold's opinion of individual English poets—and the reasons given by him why they have partially failed since the correspondence between the artist and the age was inharmonious. Now we may consider some of his critical generalizations. For him, for example, *how to live* is a question of supreme importance, and the poets and for the matter of that, English poets touch on his fundamental question. While France is strong in prose, he thinks that England is strong in poetry. The reason is that English poets are well-grounded in abiding morality, and they have the vehicle of blank verse which gives them the freedom of prose. "Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas...........is what distinguishes the English poetry............If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term "ideas," here the term "moral" makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral."

Arnold calls poetry a "criticism of life"—criticism of life comes to the same thing as the application of ideas to life. And it is connected with abiding morality, which is, as Arnold says, the basis of life. Poetry is a transcript of experience in life, and cannot but be grounded in morality. His over-emphasis on the underlying morality of great poetry and his assertion that ideas cannot be other than moral, have seemed to some people as narrowing down the range of poetry, if poetry is solely concerned

with the treatment of moral ideas. Poetry may deal with non-moral ideas and may be great too. But no objection can be taken to Arnold's elaboration of his concept: "It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that a poetry is at bottom a criticism of life, that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life—to the question: How to live? Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion; they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day; they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers; the grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them; in a poetry which might take for its motto Omar Khayam's words: "Let us make up in the tavern for the time we have wasted in the mosque." Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them; in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhausitible word *life*, until we learn to enter in its meaning. A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against *life*; poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards *life*."

"Powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life"—this may be accepted as the function of poetry. And it does not make much of a difference if we affix "moral" to ideas, if we reject the narrow and the commonly accepted sense of the word—*moral*. Moral comes from Lat. *moralis*, relating to conduct; Lat. *mor*, from nominanive *mos*, which means a manner, custom. From this interpretation of *moral* poetry as a criticism of life will cover all that has become embedded in human conscience through age long experience. Poetry will express all that is important and fundamental in the concep ions of men with the highest degree of lucidity and the utmo t beauty of language and idea. It will draw upon conceptions which have become effective by being assimilated into the moral constitution of men. Accordingly, the object of poetry is to bring

us into harmony with life, to explain life to us, to tell us how to live.

Arnold discusses also how poetry can fulfil its function. The great power of poetry is its interpretative power. As Arnold explains it, it is "not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them. When this sense is awadened in us as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us as no other can."

M. Arnold's Critical Dicta

Extracts from his *Preface to Poems* (1853-1854):

Saintsbury writes this about the *Preface*: "This which is almost the earliest finished and formal document of Mr. Arnold's critism, is also one of the best and most complete expressions of it. It contains, explicitly, or implicitly, almost everything that he said later in substance; while its form is his very best—exhibiting his native elegance and acquired scholarship, without his later assumed mannerism."

"It has been said that I wish to limit the Poet in his choice of subjects to the period of Greek and Roman antiquity; but it is not so; I only counsel him to choose for his subjects great actions, without regarding to what time they belong. Nor do I deny that the poetic faculty can and does manifest itself in treating the most trifling action, the most hopeless subject."

"Again, with respect to the study of the classical writers of antiquity: it has been said that we should emulate rather than imitate them. I make no objection: all I say is, let us study them. They can help to cure us

of what is, it seems to me, the great vice of our intellect, manifesting itself in our incredible vagaries in literature, in art, in religion, in morals ; namely, that it is *fantastic* and wants *sanity*. Sanity—that is the great virtue of the ancient literature : the want of that is the great defect of the modern, inspite of all variety and power."

"For the Muses", as Hesiod says, "were born that they might be a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares :" and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the knowledge of men. It is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. "All Art," says Schiller, "is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men. The right Art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment."

"What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations and at all times ? They are actions ; human actions, possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and, which are to be communica ed in an interesting manner by the of the Poet."

"The Poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action ; and what actions are the most excellent ? Those, certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the primary human affections ; to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time................The modernness or antiquity of an action, therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation ; this depends on its inherent qualities. To the elementary part of our nature to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting ; and interesting solelv in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. A great human action of a thousand years ago in more interesting to it than a smaller human action of to-day, even though upon the representation of this last the most consummate skill may have been expended, and though it has the advantage of appealing by its modern language, fami iar manners, contemporary allusions, to all our transient feelings and interests. These, however, have no right to demand of a poetical work that

it shall satisfy them ; their claims are to be directed elsewhere. Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions : let them interest these and the voice of all subordinate claims is at once silenced."

"The date of an action, then, signifies nothing the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more correctly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this : that, with them the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration, with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. With them the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression Predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it ; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style*; but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence because it is so simple and so well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys.

"Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treatise of Aristotle and the unrivalled works of their poets exclaim with a thousand tongues—'all depends upon the subject ; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with a feeling of its situations ; this done, everything else will follow."

"We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself ....They will permit the Poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified,

provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity."

"Shakespeare indeed chose excellent subjects – the world could afford no better than Macbeth, or Romeo and Juliet, or Othello; he has no theory respecting the necessity of choosing subjects of present import or the paramount interest attaching to allegories of the state of one's mind ; like all great poets, he knew well what constituted a poetical action; like them, wherever he found such an action, he took it; like them, too, he found his best in past times. But to these general characteristics of all great poets he added a special one of his own, a gift, namely, of abundant, and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivalled : so eminent as irresistibly to strike the attention first in him, and even to throw into comparative shade his other excellences as a poet...... Shakespeare is the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character, not from his gift of expression which rather even leads him astray, degenerating sometimes into a fondness for curiosity of expression, into an irritability of fancy, which seems to make it impossible for him to say a thing plainly even when the press of the action demands the very directest language, or its level character the very simplest.........He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients, partly, no doubt, because he had a far less cultivated and exacting audience : he has indeed a far wider range than they had, a far richer fertility of thought ; in this respect he rises above them ; in his strong conception of his subject, in the genuine way in which he is penetrated with it, he resembles them, and is unlike the moderns ; *but* in the accurate limitation of it, the conscientious rejection of superfluities the simple and rigorous development of it from the first line of his work to the last, he falls below them, and comes nearer to the moderns. In his chief works, besides what he has of his own, he has the elementary soundness of the ancients ; he has their important action and their large and broad manner ; but he has not their purity of method."

"I am speaking too———not of the best sources of intellectual stimulus for the general reader, but of the best models of instruction, for the individual writer. This last may certainly learn of the ancients, better than anywhere else, three things which it is vitally important for him to know—the all importance of the choice of a subject ; the necessity of accurate construction and the subordinate character of expression. He will learn from them how unspeakably superior is the effect of one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought, or by the happiest image. As he penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works, as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity and their calm pathos he will be convinced that it is this effect, untiy and profoundness of moral impression at which the ancient Poets aimed, that it is this which constitutes the grandeur of their works and which, makes them immortal. He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will deliver himself from the jargon of modern criticism, and escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness."

"Two kind of *dilettanti*", says Goethe, "there are in poetry: he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling: and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness and is without soul and matter. And he adds that the first does most harm to Art, and the last to himself."

Opinions of Critics about M. Arnold

"I am not myself, by any means, in general agreement-I am often in very particular disagreement—with Mr. Arnold's critical canons, (less often) with his individual judgments. But as I look back over European criticism for the years (approaching a century) which have passed since his birth, I cannot find one critic born, since that time, who can

be ranked above or even with him in general quality and accomplishment. And extending the view further over the vast expense, from Aristotle to that birth-date, though, I certainly find greater critics very much greater in originality, greater in catholicity, perhaps greater in felicity of individual utterance—I yet find that he is of their race and lineage, free of their company, one of them, not to be scanted of any sizings that can be, by however unworthy a manciple, allotted to them."

—*George Saintsbury.*

"In his two volumes of "Essays in Criticism" we have studies of foreign and English authors, which exhibit more fully than any similar writings the changed spirit....... ....all that can be said here is that the great object which Matthew Arnold the critic has seemed to have place before him, is to interpret—to gather up all the facts which are of use as indicating the special conditions of the author's personality and the special motives of his work, and then of tracing the connection between these conditions and the excellences or defects which characterize his work. In short of providing the reader with that preliminary basis of information which will enable him to read the work of the author with both discrimination and appreciation.

Indirectly, however, in the course of these studies of particular authors he has enunciated certain principles of general application.

1. He has emphasized and defined the close connexion between the author and the age in which he lives, by pointing out in every work of creative literature two distinct factors can be discerned —the personality of the writer and the mental atmosphere of the age. Gray is a case in point, and in his essay on his poetry he takes him as an example.

of a genius planted in an unfruitful soil and therefore doomed to comparative sterility.

2. He has broadly characterized the philosophical aspect to all poetic representations of reality by the luminous expression that poetry is a "criticism of life". That is to say, that the poet or novelist by creating ideal pictures of life provides an idea standard with which the facts of real life can be concerned. And since such a comparison of the real with the ideal helps us to understand the general purpose and conditions of human existence, he defines the special quality of poetic thought as its "interpretative power." In particular he has distinguished with precision the truth of poetry from the truth of science and he has told us why it is that poetry by virtue of this power of interpretation becomes, as Wordsworth has said, "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." It is because it appeals to the *whole man*, to the emotions and feelings as well as to the reason, If we understand this interpretative power, as thus defined, to be the subjective aspect of the appeal to the imagination—or the effect in the mind of the hearer or reader which the appeal of poetry produces——we shall find in the following passage a precise analysis of the effects of this appeal in the case of that art...............
"The grand power of poetry is its interpretative power..." (See above.)

3. Poetry of the highest class must exercise this power of interpretation. This appeal to the imagination (or, as Arnold himself calls it, to the "imaginative reasons"), within a given sphere and the accent of the masters of such poetry is the "high seriousness of absolute sincerity."

"For supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life; it must be an application

under the conditions fixed by law of poetic truth and poetic beauty. These laws fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness—the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. And such poetry must be essentially moral ; that is to say, it must be such as to satisfy the general sense of mankind as embodied in the principles of morality—."

W. Basil Worsfold.

"......................a certain tincture of pride was natural to him and prevented him from appreciating some things of great human value. It prevented him, for instance, from having an adequate degree of popular sympathy. He had (what is so rare in England) the sense of the state as one thing, consisting of all its citizens, the *Senatus Populusque Romanus*. But he had not the feeling of familiarity with the loves and hungers of the common man which is the essence of the egalitarian sentiment. He was a republican, but he was not a democrat. He contemptuously dismissed the wage earning, bear-drinking, ordinary labourers of England "as merely populace." They are not populace ; they are merely mankind. If you do not like them you do not like mankind. And when all the *role* of Arnold's real glories has been told, there always does remain a kind of hovering doubt as to whether he did like mankind." —*G. K. Chesterton.*

"Matthew Arnold's literary criticism, once regarded by young enthusiasts as a revelation, has long since taken a secure place in English letters. Like his poetry, unlike his theology and his politics, it has original and intrinsic value. It is penetrating as well as brilliant, conscientious as well as imaginative. Matthew Arnold may be said to have done for literature almost what Ruskin did for art. He reminded, or informed, the British public that criticism was a serious thing:

that good criticism was just as important as good authorship: that it was not a question of individual taste but partly of received authority and partly of trained judgment. His own masters, besides the old Greeks, were chiefly Goethe and Sainte-Beauve. But few critics have been so thoroughly original and still fewer have had so large a share of the "daemonic faculty", the faculty which awakens intelligent enthusiasm in others. *Essays in Criticism* is one of the indispensable books. Not to have read it is to be ignorant of a great intellectual event." —*Herbert W. Paul.*

Essays in Criticism (Second Series) and a Brief Review

Essays in Criticism (second series) was published in 1888. A Prefatory Note to *Essays in Criticism* was contributed by Lord Coleridge. There are nine essays in all, the last two being *Count Leo Tolstoi* and *Amiel*, in which English readers might not be directly interested. The first essay, *The Study of Poetry*, with which the volume opens, was written for Humphry Ward's *Selecions from the English Poets* It is a well-documented essay, recording his mature judgments upon poetry. Truth and seriousness are the two elements to whieh he draws the reader's attention If they make what good poetry should be, he holds that they are inseparable from style and manner. In good poetry then there is a perfect correspondence between matter or content and form or style. To begin with, this is a sound approach to poetry ; it is a recognition of organic connection between thought and style. The essay has a fairly wide range. He proceeds to develop the idea that poetry is a criticism of life under conditions fixed for it by poetic truth and poetic beauty. The historic estimate or the personal estimate cannot establish good poetry. He points out how either of them leads us away from a correct assessment of the true qualities of poetry. The practical way

of arriving at the real estimate is to study poetry, and fix in the mind memorable lines and passages and apply them as a test.

Briefly, but discursively, Arnold reviews the course and development of poetry. What he means by a real estimate he applies to Burns. In coming to speak of Chaucer he traces the development of early French Poetry—the poetry of the Troubadours (southern France), and the poetry of Trouvers (northern France), and shows Chaucer's superiority in substance and style of poetry, which determines the future of English poetry—a fact clearly pointed out by Arnold. The age of Dryden and Pope is an age of prose which meant a consequent fall off in poetry, and it is shown how the age hampered Gray. In spite of anti-romantic proclivities, he does justice to Burns, even when pointing out his limitations.

The second essay '*Milton*' was Arnold's address delivered in St. Margaret's Westminster on February 13, 1888. He warns against the Anglo-Saxon contagion *i. e.*, predominance of material interest in life which is a danger to the ideal of a high and rare excellence in art and letters. The great style of Milton, on which Arnold lays all emphasis, can be corrective to the tendency, mentioned above.

In his essay on '*Gray*' he investigates the cause of the poet's sterility. The age was uncongenial to him. If he had been born either in the Elizabethan age or in the era of the French Revolution, he might have done much better. 'He never spoke out'—these are the words of Gray's friend, James Brown, the master of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge. In these words Anrold finds the keynote to the scantiness of his poetic production.

About '*Keats*' he has something to say on his weakness of character, and deprecates his taste, but admits that he is

a great poet in so far as he possesses Shakespear's "natural magic" by which Arnold means Keats' rendering of expression, though he does not possess Shakespeare's faculty of moral interpretation. After all Keats is of the lineage of Shakespeare.

'*Wordsworth*' is Arnold's favourite poet. He finds in wordsworth what he calls the criticism of life—a noble and profound application of ideas to life. But he points out that Wordsworth needs to be discriminatingly studied. In his large poems—*Excursion and Prelude*—there is much that is dull, flat and prosy. Wordsworth's greatness, according to Arnold, lies in his powerful application to his subject, of ideas "on men, on nature, and on human life." Arnold's moral prepossession comes in here, and he quotes Voltaire saying that the great merit of English poets lies in treating moral ideas. Now Arnold means that it is the question, *how to live*. And this means again the powerful and profound application of ideas to life, there being no harm in designating idea as 'moral' since human life is predominantly moral. Wordsworth has a large share in the application of ideas to life. Arnold attaches no value to a philosophical interpretation (attempted by some critics) of Wordsworth's poetry.

Arnold does more than justice to '*Byron*', which he would have been temperamentally incapable of doing. Byron was a rebel, and carried his lawlessness into art. The wise restraint of the Greeks, which Arnold admires so

much and to which he is dedicated as a critic, is alien to Byron Yet Arnold discovers in Byron "sincerity and strength", to quote Swinburne's phrase. Byron is, therefore, great in spite of his limitations. Arnold might have been influenced by Goethe's high opinion of Byron. Byron's fight against British Philistinism might have been another factor. Arnold himself campaigned against British Philistinism.

His essay on '*Shelley*' is a review of Dowden's *Life of Shelley*. According to Arnold, Dowden has not shown a good taste in going into all details of Shelley's relations with one woman after another. And his defence of Shelley has made things worse for Shelley. Arnold condemns Shelley on moral grounds—"an entirely human inflammability, joined to an inhuman want of humour and a superhuman power of self-deception." By these causes he explains Shelley's abandonment of Harriet Sestbrook. There is, however, some truth in his description of Whelley as "a beautiful and ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain." He does little justice to his exquisite lyrical gift, to his passionate (if a little abstract) love of humanity, to his revolutionary ardour.

Arnold does not seem to be quite fair to '*Tolstoi*'. He praises Tolstoi's realism. But his realism makes it all the worse for art as far as *Anna Karenine* is concerned. This is an opinion which few will defend. Arnold is tied up with the Greek standard of sanity and temperance—and he seems to apply it too severely. That seems to be the reason for finding fault with *Anna Karenine*. He sketches the rise of realism in fiction, and follows Sainte Beuve in this matter. Realism in fiction started first in France, and

Russia followed the example. The truth of this may be disputed by some.

In the last essay '*Amiel*', Arnold briefly analyses Amiel's speculative philosophy, which is based upon Plotinus. But Arnold thinks more highly of Amiel as a critic than as a philosopher. He might have made even a better critic than Sainte-Beuve if he had given more time to the art of criticism than to philosophy.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM AT THE PRESENT TIME

Many objections have been made to a proposition which, in some remarks of mine on translating Homer, I ventured to put forth; a proposition about criticism, and its importance at the present day. I said: "Of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itse.f it really is." I added, that owing to the operation in English literature of certain causes, "almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires, criticism;" and that the power and value of English literature was thereby impaired. More than one rejoinder declared that the importance I here assigned to criticism was exeessive, and asserted the inherent superiority of the creative effort of the human spirit over its critical effort. And the other day, having been led by a Mr. Sharip's excellent notice of Wordsworth to turn again to his biography I found, in the words of this great man, whom I, for one, must always listen to with the profoundest respect, a sentence passed on the critic's business, which seems to justify every possible disparagement of it. Wordsworth says in one of his letters:

The writers in the publications" (the Reviews), "while they prosecute their inglorious employment cannot be supposed to be in a state of mind very favourable for being affected by the finer influences of a thing so pure as genuine poetry."

And a trustworthy reporter of conversation quotes a more elaborate judgment to the same effect :

"Wordsworth holds the critical power very low, infinitely lower than the inventive ; and he said to-day that if the quantity of time consumed in writing critiques on the works of others were given to original composition, of whatever kind it might be, it would be much better employed ; it would make a man find out sooner his own level, and it would do infinitely less mischief. A false or malicious criticism may do much injury to the minds of others, a stupid invention, either in prose or verse, is quite harmless."

It is almost too much to expect of poor human nature, that a man capable of producing some effect in one line of literature, should, for the greater good of society, voluntarily doom himself to impotence and obscurity in another. Still less is this to be expected from men addicted to the composition of the "false or malicious criticism" of which Wordsworth speaks. However, everybody would admit that a false or malicious criticism had better never have been written. Everybody, too, would be willing to admit, as a general proposition, that the critical faculty is lower than the inventive. But is it true that criticism is really, in itself, a baneful and injurious employment ; is it true that all time given to writing critiques on the works of others would be mueh better employed if it were given to original composition, of whatever kind this may be ? Is it true that Johnson had better have gone on producing more

Irenes instead of writing his *Lives of the Poets* : nay, is it certain that Wordsworth himself was better employed in making his Ecclesiastical Sonnets than when he made his celebrated Preface, so full of criticism, and criticism of the works of others ? Wordsworth was himself a great critic, and it is to be sincerely regretted that he has not left us more criticism ; Goethe was one of the greatest of critics, and we may sincerely congratulate ourselves that he has left us so much criticism. Without wasting time over the exaggeration which Wordsworth's judgment on criticism clearly contains, or over an attempt to trace the causes,—not difficult, I think, to be traced,—which may have led Wordsworth to this exaggeration, a critic may with advantage seize an occasion for trying his own conscience, and for asking himself of what real service at any given moment the practice of criticism either is or may be made to his own mind and spirit, and to the minds and spirits of others.

The critical power is of lower rank than the creative. True ; but in assenting to this proposition, one or two things are to be kept in mind. It is undeniable that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity, is the highest function of man ; it is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness. But it is undeniable, also, that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art ; if it were not so, all but a very few men would be shut out from the true happiness of all men. They may have it in well-doing, they may have it in learning, they may have it even in criticising. This is one thing to be kept in mind. Another is, that the exercise of the creative power in the production of great works of literature or art, however high this exercise of it may rank, its no at all epochs and under all conditions possible, and

that therefore labour may be vainly spent in attempting it, which might with more fruit be used in preparing for it, in rendering it possible. This creative power works with elements, with materials; what if it has not those materials, those elements, ready for its use? In that case it must surely wait till they are ready. Now, in literature,—I will limit myself to literature, for it is about literature that the question arises,—the elements with which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time. At any rate we may lay it down as certain that in modern literature no manifestation of the creative power not working with these can be very important or fruitful. And I say *current* at the time, not merely accessible at the time: for creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas, that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations,—making beautiful works with them, in short. But it must have the atmosphere, it must find itself amidst the order of ideas, in order to work freely; and these it is not so easy to command. This is why great creative epochs in literature are so rare, that is why there is so much that is unsatisfactory in the productions of many men of real genius, because, for the creation of a master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment and the man is not enough without the moment; the creative power has, for its happy

exercise, appointed elements, and those elements are not in its own control.

Nay, they are more within the control of the critical power. It is the business of the critical power, as I said in the words already quoted, "in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is. "Thus it tends, at last, to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself. It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, by comparison with that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature.

Or, to narrow our range, and quit these considerations of the general march of genuine and of society,—considerations which are apt to become too abstract and impalpable,—every one can see that a poet, for instance, ought to know life and the world before dealing with them in poetry; and life and the world being in modern times very complex things, the creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, implies a great critical effort behind it, else it must be a comparatively poor, barren, and short-lived affair. This is why Byron's poetry had so little endurance in it and Goethe's so much; both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe's was nourished by a great critical effort providing the true materials for it, and Byron's was not; Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively and thoroughly than Byron. He knew a great deal more of them, and be knew them much more as they really are.

It has long seemed to me that the burst of creative activity in our literature, through the first quarter of this

century, has about it in fact something premature; and that from this cause its productions are doomed, most of them, in spite of sanguine hopes which accompanied and do still accompany them, to prove hardly more lasting than the productions of far less splendid epochs. And this prematureness comes from its having proceeded without having its proper data, without sufficient materials to work with. In other words, the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety. Wordsworth cared little for books, and disparaged Goethe. I admire Wordsworth, as he is, so much that I cannot wish him different; and it is vain, no doubt, to imagine such a man different from what he is, to suppose that he *could* have been different. But surely the one thing wanting to make Wordsworth an even greater poet than he is—, his thought richer, and his influence of wider application,—was that he should have read more books, among them, no doubt, those of that Goethe whom he disparaged without reading him.

But to speak of books and reading may easily lead to a misunderstanding here. It was not really books and reading that lacked to our poetry at this epoch; Shelley had plenty of reading, Coleridge and immense reading. Pindar and Sophocles—as we all say so glibly, and often with so little discernment of the real import of what we are saying—had not many books; Shakespeare was no deep reader. True; but in the Greece of Pindar and Sophocles, in the England of Shakespeare, the poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by

fresh thought, intelligent and alive. And this state of things is the true basis for the creative power's exercise, in this it finds its data, its materials, truly ready for its hand; all the books and reading in the world are only valuable as they are helps to this. Even when this does not actually exist, books and reading may enable a man to construct a kind of semblance of it in his own mind, a world of knowledge and intelligence in which he may live and work. This is by no means and equivalent to the artist for the nationally diffused life and thought of the epochs of Sophocles or Shakespeare; but, besides that it may be a means of preparation for such epochs, it does really constitute, if many share in it, a quickening and sustaining atmosphere of great value. Such an atmosphere the many-sided learning and the long and widely-combined critical effort of Germany formed for Goethe, when he lived and worked. There was no national glow of life and thought there as in the Athens of Pericles or the England of Elizabeth. That was the poet's weakness. But there was a sort of equivalent for it in the complete culture and unfettered thinking of a large body of Germans. That was his strength. In the England of the first quarter of this century there was neither a national glow of life and thought, such as we had in the age of Elizabeth, nor yet a culture and a force of learning and criticism such as were to be found in Germany. Therefore the creative power of poetry wanted, for success in the highest sense, materials and a basis; a through interpretation of the world was necessarily denied to it.

Burke is so great because, almost alone in England, he brings thought to hear upon politics, he saturates politics with thought. It is his accident that his ideas were at the service of an epoch of concentration, not of an epoch of seech

expansion ; it is his characteristic that he so lived by ideas, and had such a source of them welling up within him, that he cold float even an epoch of concentration and English Tory politics with them. It does not hurt him that Dr. Price and the Liberals were enraged with him ; it does not even hurt him that George the Third, and the Tories were enchanted with him. His greatness is that he lived in a world which neither English Liberalism nor English Toryism is apt to enter ;—the world of ideas, not the world of catch-words and party habits. So far is it from being really true of him that he "to party gave up what was meant for mankind," that at the very end of his fierce struggle with the French Revolution, after all his invectives against its false pretensions, hollowness, and madness, with his sincere conviction of its mischievousness, he can close a memorandum on the best means of combating it, some of the last pages he ever wrote,—the *Thoughts on French Affairs*, in December 1791,—with these striking words :—

"The evil is stated, in my opinion, as it exists. The remedy must be where power, wisdom, and information, I hope, are more united with good intentions than they can be with me. I have done with this subject, I believe, for ever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. *If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it ; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it ; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.*"

That return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed

1(de-kree) n. command of a ruler or government having the force of a law (بادشاہ یا حکومت کا) حکم، فرمان

in any literature. That is what I call living by ideas : when one side of a question has long had your earnest support, when all your feelings are engaged, when you hear all round you no language but one, when your party talks this language like a steam-engine and can imagine no other, still to be able to think, still to be irresistably carried, if so it be by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything *but what the Lord has put in your mouth*. I know nothing more striking, and I must add that I know nothing English, more un-English.

For the Englishman in general is like my friend the Member of Parliament, and believes, point-blank, that for a thing to be an anomaly is absolutely no objection to it whatever. He is like the Lord Auckland of Burke's day, who, in a memorandum on the French Revolution, talks of "certain miscreants, assuming the name of philosophers, who have presumed themselves capable of establishing a new system of society." The Englishman has been called a political animal, and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers "miscreants," because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. This would be all very well if the dislike and neglect confined themselves to ideas transported out of their own sphere, and meddling rashly with practice ; but they are inevitably extended to ideas as such, and to the whole life of intelligence ; practice is everything, a free play of the mind is nothing. The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, being an essential provider of elements without which a nation's spirit, whatever compensations it may have for them must, in the long run, die of inanition, hardly enters into an Englishman's thoughts. It is noticeable that the word

curiosity, which in other languages is used in a good sense, to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake,—it is noticeable, I say, that this word has in our language no sense of the kind, no sense but a rather bad and disparaging one. But criticism, real criticism, is essentially the exercise of this very quality. It obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and every thing of the kind; and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever. This is an instinct for which there is, I think, little original sympathy in the practical English nature, and what there was of it has undergone a long benumbing period of blight and suppression in the epoch of concentration which followed the French Revolution.

But epochs of concentration cannot well endure for ever; epochs of expansion, in the due course of things, follow them. Such an epoch of expansion seems to be opening in this country. In the first place all danger of a hostile forcible pressure of foreign ideas upon our practice has long disappeared; like the traveller in the fable, therefore, we begin to wear our cloak a little more loosely. Then, with a long peace, the ideas of Europe steal gradually and amicably in, and mingle, though in infinitesimally small quantities at a time, with our own notions. Then, too, in spite of all that is said about the absorbing and brutalising influence of our passionate material progress, it seems to me indisputable that this progress is likely, though not certain, to lead in the end to an apparition of intellectual life; and that man, after he has made himself perfectly comfortable and has now to determine what to

do with himself next, may begin to remember that he has a mind, and that the mind may be made the source of great pleasure. I grant it is mainly the privilege of faith, at present, to discern this end to our railways, our business, and our fortune-making; but we shall see if, here as elsewhere, faith is not in the end the true prophet. Our ease, our travelling, and our unbounded liberty to hold just as hard and securely as we please to the practice to which our notions have given birth, all tend to beget an inclination to deal a little more freely with these notions themselves, to canvass them a little, to penetrate a little into their real nature. Flutterings of curiosity, in the foreign sense of the word, appear amongst us, and it is in these that criticism must look to find its account. Criticism first; a time of true creative, activity perhaps,—which, as I have said, must inevitably be proceded amongst us by a time of criticism,—hereafter, when criticism has done its work.

It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course, in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it, and to produce fruit for the future, it ought to take. The rule may be summed up in one word,—*disinterestedness*. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called "the practical view of things;" by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. Its business is, as I have said, simply to know the best that is known

and thought in the world and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty, with due ability ; but its business is to do no more, and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions which will never fail to have due prominence given to them. Else criticism, besides being really false to its own nature, merely continues in the old rut which it has hitherto followed in this country, and will certainly miss the chance now given to it. For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of mind the second ; so much play of mind as is compatible with the prosecution of those practical ends is all that is wanted. An organ like the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world, existing, it may be said, as just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not. But we have the *Edinburgh Review*, existing as an organ of the old Whigs, and for as much play of the mind as may suit its being that we have the *Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the Tories, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that ; we have the *British Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the political Dissenters and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that ; we have the *Times*, existing as an organ of the common, satisfied, well-to-do Englishman, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that. And so on through all the various fractions, political and religious, of our society ;

every fraction has, as such, its organ of criticism, but the notion of combining all fractions in the common pleasure of a free disinterested play of mind meets with no favour. Directly this play of mind wants to have more scope, and to forget the pressure of practical considerations a little, it is checked, it is made to feel the chain. We saw this the other day in the extinction, so much to be regretted, of the *Home and Foreign Review*. Perhaps in no organ of criticism in this country was there so much knowledge, so much play of mind; but these could not save it. The *Dublin Review*, subordinates play of mind to the practical business of English and Irish Catholicism, and lives. It must needs be that men should act in sect and parties, that each of these sects and parties should have its organ, and should make this organ subserve the interests of its action; but it would be well, too, that there should be a criticism, not the minister of these interests, not their enemy, but absolutely and entirely independent of them. No other criticism will ever attain any real authority or make any real way towards its end,—the creating a current of true and fresh ideas.

It is because criticism has so little kept in the pure intellectual sphere, has so little detached itself from practice, has been so directly polemical and controversial, that it has so ill accomplished, in this country, its best spiritual work; which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarising, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things. A polemical practical criticism makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of their practice, makes them willingly assert its ideal perfection, in order the better to secure it against attack; and clearly this is narrowing and baneful for them. If they were reassured on the practical side, speculative considerations of ideal perfection they

might be brought to entertain, and their spiritual horizon would thus gradually widen. Sir Charles Adderley says to the Warwickshire farmers :—

"Talk of the improvement of breed! Why, the race we ourselves represent, the men and women, the old Anglo-Saxon race, are the best breed in the whole world...The absence of a too enervating climate, too unclouded skies, and a too luxurious nature, has produced so vigorous a race of people, and has rendered us so superior to all the world."

Mr. Roebuck says to the Sheffield cutlers :—

"I look around me and ask what is the state of England? Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect security? I ask you whether the world over or in past history, there is anything like it? Nothing. I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last."

Now obviously there is a peril for poor human nature in words and thoughts of such exuberant self-satisfaction, until we find ourselves safe in the streets of the Celestial City.

"Das wenige verschwindet leicht dem Blicke
Der vorwarts sicht, wie viel noch ubrig bleibt—"

says Goethe ; "the little that is done seems nothing when we look forward and see how much we have yet to do. Clearly this is a better line of reflection for weak humanity, so long as it remains on this earthly field of labour and trial.

It will be said that it is a very subtle and indirect action which I am thus prescribing for criticism, and that, by embracing in this manner the Indian virtue of detachment and abandoning the sphere of practical life, it condemns itself to a slow and obscure work. Slow and obscure ti

may be, but it is the only proper work of criticism. The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are ; very inadequate ideas will always satisfy them. On these inadequate ideas reposes, and must repose the general practice of the world. That is as much as saying that whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle ; but it is only by this small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current at all. The rush and roar of practical life will always have a dizzying and attracting effect upon the most collected spectator, and tend to draw him into its vortex ; most of all will this be the case where that life is so powerful as it is in England. But it is only by remaining collected, and refusing to lend himself to the point of view of the practical man, that the critic can do the practical man any service ; and it is only by the greatest sincerity in pursuing his own course, and by at last convincing even the practical man of his sincerity, that he can escape misunderstandings which perpetually threaten him.

I say, the critic must be kept out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere, if he wants to make a beginning for that more free speculative treatment of things, which may perhaps one day make its benefits felt even in this sphere, but in a natural and thence irresistible manner.

Do what he will, however, the critic will still remain exposed to frequent misunderstandings, and nowhere so much as in this country. For here people are particularly indisposed even to comprehend that without this free disinterested treatment of things, truth and the highest culture are out of the question. So immersed are they in practical life, so accustomed to take all their notions from this life and its processes, that they are apt to think that truth and

culture themselves can be reached by the processes of this life, and that it is an impertinent singularity to think of reaching them in any other. "We are all *terrae filii*," cries their eloquent advocate; "all Philistines together. Away with the notion of proceeding by any other course than the course dear to the Philistines; let us have a social movement, let us organise and combine a party to pursue truth and new thought, let us call it *the liberal party*, and let us all stick to each other, and back each other up. Let us have no nonsense about independent criticism, and intellectual delicacy, and the few and the many. Don't let us trouble ourselves about foreign thought; we shall invent the whole thing for ourselves as we go along. If one of us speaks well, applaud him if one of us speaks ill, applaud him too; we are all in the same movement, we are all liberals, we are all in pursuit of truth." In this way the pursuit of truth becomes really a social, practical, pleasurable affair, almost requiring a chairman, a secretary, and advertisements; with the excitement of an occasionals scandal, with a little resistance to give the happy sense of difficulty overcome: but, in general, plenty of bustle and very little thought. To act is so easy, as Goethe says; to think is so hard! It is true that the critic has many temptations to go with the stream, to make one of the party movement, one of these *terrae filii*; it seems ungracious to refuse to be a *terrae filius*, when so many excellent people are; but the critic's duty is to refuse, or, if resistance is vain, at least to cry with Obermann: *Perisons en resistant.*

For criticism, these are elementary laws, but they never can be popular, and in this country they have been very little followed, and one meets with immense obstacles in following them. That is a reason for asserting them again

and again. Criticism must maintain its independence of the practical spirit and its aims. Even with well-meant efforts of the practical spirit it must express dissatisfaction, if in the sphere of the ideal they seem impoverihsing and limiting. It must not hurry on to the goal because of its practical importance. It must be patient, and to know how to wait; and flexible, and know how to attach itself to things and how to withdraw from them. It must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fullness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent. It must be apt to discern the spiritual shortcomings or illusions of powers that in the practical sphere may be beneficent. And this without any notion of favouring or injuring, in the practical sphere, one power or the other; without any notion of playing off, in this sphere, one power against the other.

I lately heard a man of thought and energy contrasting the want of ardour and movement which he now found amongst young men in this country with what he remembered in his own youth, twenty years ago. "What reformers we were then!" he exclaimed; "what a zeal we had! how we canvassed every institution in Church and State, and were prepared to remodel them all on first principles!" He was inclined to regret, as a spiritual flagging, the lull which he saw. I am disposed rather to regard it as a pause in which the turn to a new mode of spiritual progress is being accomplished. Everything was long seen, by the young and ardent amongst us, in inseparable connection with politics and practical life. We have pretty well exhausted the benefits of seeing things in this connection, we have got all that can be got by so seeing them. Let us try a more disinterested mode of seeing them; let us betake ourselves

more to the serener life of the mind and spirit. This life, too, may have its excesses and danger; but they are not for us at present. Let us think of quietly enlarging our stock of true and fresh ideas, and not, as soon as we get an idea or half an idea, be running out with it into the street, and trying to make it rule there. Our ideas will, in the end, shape the world all the better for maturing a little.

I have wished, above all, to insist on the attitude which criticism should adopt towards things in general; on its right tone and temper of mind. But then comes another question as to the subject-matter which literary criticism should most seek. Here, in general, its course is determined for it by the idea which is the law of its being; the idea of a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas. By the very nature of things, as England is not all the world, much of the best that is known and thought in the world cannot be of English growth, must be foreign; by the nature of things again, it is just this that we are least likely to know, while English thought is streaming in upon us from all sides, and takes excellent care that we shall not be ignorant of its existence. The English critic of literature, therefore, must dwell much on foreign thought, and with particular heed on any part of it, which, while significant and fruitful in itself, is for any reason specially likely to escape him. Again, judging is often spoken of as the critic's one business, and so in some sense it is; but the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh

knowledge, and letting his own judgment pass along with it,—but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract law-giver,—that the critic will generally do most good to his readers. Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard (and if this is not done, how are we to get at our *best in the world*?) criticism may have to deal with a subject-matter so famillar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgment; an enunciation, and detailed application of principles. Here the great safe-guard is never to let oneself become abstract, always to retain an intimate and lively consciousness of the truth of what one is saying, and, the moment this fails us, to be sure that something is wrong. Still, under all circumstances, this mere judgment and application of principles is, in itself, not the most satisfactory work to the critic; like mathematics it is tautological, and cannot well give us, like fresh learning, the sense of creative activity.

But stop, some one will say; all this talk is of no practical use to us whatever; this criticism of yours is not what we have in our minds when we speak of criticism; when we speak of critics and criticism, we mean critics and criticism of the current English literature of the day; when you offer to tell criticism its function, it is to this criticism that we expect you to address yourself. I am sorry for it, for I am afraid I must disappoint these expectations. I am bound by my own definition of critiscism: *a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.* How much of current English literature comes into this "best that is known and thought in world?" Not very much, I fear certainly less, at this moment,

than fo the current literature of France or Germany. Well, then, am I to alter my definition of criticism, in order to meet the requirements of a number of practising English critics, who after all, are free in their choice of a business? That would be making criticism lend itself just to one of those alien practical considerations, which, I have said, are so fatal to it. One may say, indeed, to those who have to deal with the mass—so much better disregarded—of current English literature, that they may at all events endeavour, in dealing with this, to try it so far as they can, by the standard of the best that is known and thought in the world; one may say, that to get anywhere near this standard every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own; and the more unlike his own, the better. But, after all, the criticism I am really concerned with,—the criticism which alone, can much help us for the future, the criticism which, throughout Europe, is at the present day meant, when so much stress is laid on the importance of criticism and the critical spirit,—is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result: and whose members have for their proper outfit a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another, Special, local and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this programme,—And what is that but saying that we too, all of us, as individuals, the more thoroughly we carry it out, shall make the more progress?

There is so much inviting us!—what are we to take? what will th nourish us in growth towards perfection? That

is the question which, with the immense field of life and of literature lying before him, the critic has to answer; for himself first, and afterwards for others. In this idea of the critic's business the essays brought together in the present volume have had their origin ; in this idea, widely different as are their subjects, they have, perhaps their unity.

I conclude with what I said at the beginning : to have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and the great proof of being alive, and it is not denied to criticism to have it ; but then criticism must be sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever widening its knowledge. Then it may have, in no contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity ; a sense which man insight and conscience will prefer to what he might derive from a poor, starved, fragmentary, inadequate creation. And at some epochs no other creation is possible.

Still, in full measure, the sense of creative activity belongs only to genuine creation ; in literature we must never forget that. But what true man of letters ever can forget it ? It is no such common matter for a gifted nature to come into possession of a current of true and living ideas, and to produce amidst the inspiration of them, that we are likely to underrate it. The epochs of Aeschylus and Shakespeare make us feel their pre-eminence. In an epoch like those is, no doubt, the true life of literature ; there is the promised land, towards which criticism can only beckon. That promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness ; but to have desired to enter it; to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries, it will certainly to the best title to esteem with posterity.

THE FUNCTION OF CRIT!CISM AT THE PRESENT TIME

By

MATTHEW ARNOLD

SUMMARY

Some Objections to Arnold's View about Criticism.

While translating Homer, Arnold had observed that the literature of France and Germany, and Europe in general, was rich in criticism in all branches of learning—theology, philosophy, history, art, science—where as the English literature was, due to certain causes, deficient in it, which impaired its power and value. Objections were raised against this remark. It was said that the creative effort had an inherent superiority over the critical effort. Mr. Shairp drew his (Arnold's) attention to the remarks made by Wordsworth to the effect that the critic's mind was not favourable for being affected by the finer influences of genuine poetry. Another reporter had Said that Wordsworth held that the time spent in criticism could have been better employed if the critic had attempted to bring out some original composition of whatever quality, because a false and malicious criticism could do much injury to the minds of others than a stupid original writing.

Arnold's Reply.

Nobody can deny the fact that malicious or false criticism is of no value, and that, as a general proposition,

critical faculty is inferior to inventive faculty. But it is not true that all criticism is harmful and injurious. It is also not true that a person who has all his life written criticism can be better employed if he begins by writing original things of whatever quality. Dr. Johnson is more famous for his critical writings than his original production. Wordsworth himself has indulged in criticism in his *Preface*, as he was a great critic. Goethe has, fortunately for us, left behind so much criticism. A critic tries in his own way to serve his own mind and those of others by his critical effort.

The Exercise of Creative Power not possible in All Conditions and at All Times.

We may admit that the critical power is of lower rank than the creative. But in doing so we have to keep in mind one or two things. *Firstly*, men may exercise their creative power in other ways than producing great literary books. They may find pleasure in serving fellow-men, in learning, and even in criticising. *Secondly* the exercise of the creative power is not possible at all epochs (times) and in all conditions. It works with elements and materials, and in literature these elements are ideas, the best ideas on every matter and current at the time. If they are lacking the creative power can not produce any thing important. Creative literary genius does not discover ideas; it is the business of the philosopher. Its chief business is confined to synthesis (combining of elements) and exposition and not analysis and discovery. A literary genins is inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, which he tries to present in the most effective and attractive combinations and thus produces beautiful works. But for this the atmosphere is essential. This is the reason why great creative epochs

are so rare. For the creation of a master-piece of literature two power must work in agreement—the power of the man and the powers of the moment. The former is not enough without the latter to create any beautiful literature.

Critical Power an Aid to Creative Power.

The business of the critical power being to see the object as in itself it really is, it tends to create an intellectual situation which the creative power makes use of. It establishes an order of new ideas, which soon reach the society and as they reflect real life they are received with keen interest and cause a stir which brings about creative epochs of literature. A poet ought to know life and the world before he deals with them in poetry. But in modern times life and the world are very complex things. This means that unless a poet uses great critical effort his labour will be in vain and the result of his effort poor, barren and short lived. Byron (of England) and Goethe (of Germany) had both great productive power, but Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more thoroughly than Byron. Hence his poetry is more enduring than Byron's.

The creative activity in English literature in the first quarter of the nineteenth century was rather premature, because the writers had not the proper data and sufficient material to work with, although there was plenty of energy and plenty of creative force. Want of knowledge of books made Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, and Wordsworth so wanting in completeness and variety. On the other hand Goethe was a well read man whom Wordsworth should have read before disparaging him. Let it not be presumed that reading of books alone is enough. Shelly had read much, Coleridge much more. Pindar and Sophocles

(of Greece) and Shakespeare (of England) were not great readers. Still Pindar, Sophocles and Shakespeare have been by far more successful than Shelly and Coleridge, because Pindar, Sophocles and Shakespeare lived in a current of ideas animating and nourishing the creative power. Society was fully permeated by fresh thought and appreciated it. In such a state of society creative power finds its data and material ready and at hand. In the absence of such an atmosphere, books help one to create an atmosphere, not as good as the real but resembling it to an extent. This serves as a means of preparation for such epochs. In Goethe's time there was no glow of life and thought in Germany, but there was a sort of substitute for it in the complete culture and unfettered thinking of the Germans, which gave him strength. In England in the first quarter of the nineteenth century there was neither a national glow nor a culture and force of learning and criticism. Hence creative poetry lacked the necessary materials to prosper.

Criticism Requires Man to Face Facts Squarely and Disinteres'edly.

We have an example of Burke, the great political thinker of England, who lived by ideas, in the world of ideas, not of catch words and party habits. It is not correct that all his ability and skill was used to uphold the cause of the party to which he belonged. Having written much against the French Revolution in his *Thoughts on French Affairs* (December 1791) he concludes by admitting that to oppose the mighty current of human affairs amounts to resist what god has decreed after all, *i.e.*, the revolution cannot be prevented by mere opposing it. This is living by ideas. When a certain idea gains ground and one hears no other thing than it and one's party upholds it, it is highly credit-

able, though against the English character to come round to the opposite view and have the courage to express it. The Englishman is called a political animal and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas have no value for him. He hates thinkers because they meddle with politics and practice. To him practice is every thing and a free play of mind is nothing. This habit is not confined to political and practical affairs but is extended to the whole life of intelligence. This is wrong. A free play of the mind upon all subjects is a pleasure in itself. To satisfy one's *Curiosity* is a good thing but in the English language the word is used in a rather bad sense, whereas criticism is based on 'curiosity' and a desire to satisfy it. It prompts a man instinctively to know the best that is known and thought in the world, regardless of practice, politics and such other things. This is a quality which finds no sympathy in the English nature and has particularly been dulled after the French Revolution.

The Era of Criticism Dawning on England.

A change in the habits of the Englishmen is perceptible. An epoch of expansion seems to be following the epoch of concentration. This is due to three causes. *Firstly*, there is no longer a danger of the pressure of foreign ideas upon the English practice. *Secondly*, a long period of peace has enabled ideas from other European countries to find their place calmly in the English minds. *Thirdly*, the material progress of the country has made the Englishman eager to look forward and think what to do next. This has led him to think of the free play of the mind. Flutterings of curiosity have begun to appear and it is in these that criticism must look to find its account. The first stage is criticism

nd the next creative activity. A time of true creative activity follows the time of criticism.

Disinterestedness Basic Rule of Criticism

Disinterestedness should be the rule that English Criticism must follow, and this means keeping aloof from "the practical view of things," by giving the mind a free play on all subjects, and avoiding all political and practical considerations. The business of criticism is to know the best that is known and thought in the world; and having known it to create a current of true and fresh ideas. This should be done with utmost honesty and ability leaving aside all questions of practical consequences, which have till now stifled criticism in England. In England the organs (journals) of criticism are organs of men and parties and serve their purpose without giving the mind a free play. There is no such organ here as the French *Revue des De sex Mondes*. The *Edinburgh Review* is an organ of the Whigs, the *Quarterly Review* an organ of the Tories, the *British Quarterly Review* an organ of the political Dissenters and the *Times* an organ of the well-to-do Englishman. All these journals are run on lines of party politics. The only independent journal *Home and Foreign Review* has unfortunately ceased to exist. Criticism in order to be of any use, must aim at creating a current of true and fresh ideas.

Criticism in England not having detached itself from practice has not served its purpose, which is to lead a man towards perfection by making him see what is excellent in itself. Criticism based on controversy and practical politics makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of their practice. Such criticism has a narrowing and harmful effect. Such sweeping statements as that of Sir Charles Adderley that the men and women of the Anglo Saxon race

are the best breed in the world or that of Mr. Roebuck that there is nowhere such security as in England, are of little use. We should not forget what Goethe has said, *viz*, "the little that is done seems nothing when we look forward and see how much we have yet to do."

Detached Criticism Slow and Obscure

It will be objected that detached criticism is a slow and obscure process. It may be, but it is the only proper work of criticism. The masses are not keen to see things as they are; they are satisfied with inadequate ideas on which the general practice is based. Thus one who is keen to see things as they are will find himself in a minority, but this minority by patiently doing its work will create fresh ideas which will ever get current at all. A critic must remain collected and should refuse to be carried away by the view of the practical man. Then he will be of service to the practical man also. This requires the greatest sincerity of purpose. He must keep himself out of the immediate practice in the political, social and huminitarian spheres.

But do what he may, a critic in England will always be exposed to misunderstandings, because here people are so much absorbed in practical life that they think that truth and culture can be reached by this process alone without bothering to follow any other way. They say "we are the sons of the soil" and must follow the practice of the land. They propose to have their own party—*the liberal party*—to back each other, without having to do anything with independent criticism and intellectual delicacy. They forget what Goethe has said—"to act is so easy, to think so hard. A critic may be tempted to go with the stream as one of the sons of the soil, but he must refuse to do so.

Elementary Rules of Criticism

Criticism must maintain its independence of the practical spirit and its aims. It must not follow even a well meant practice if it does not come up to its standard. It must not hurry on to the goal because of its practical importance. It must be patient, flexible, able to know how to attach itself to, and how to withdraw from things. It must be able to study and praise elements which tend to spiritual perfection though they be harmful from practical point of view. It must also be able to see the spiritual short-comings or illusions of powers that may be useful in the practical sphere.

New Mode of Spiritual Progress.

Some people complain of the lack of zeal amongest young men, which they saw and felt twenty years ago. This is not to be regretted, because this is a transitional period. People, young and old were used to see things from a practical point of view but that has outgrown its usefulness. We should now try a more disinterested mode of seeing them with the aid of mental and spiritual powers. This will broaden our views and enlarge our stock of true and fresh ideas. We should not be contented with a mere idea or half an idea as it strikes us, and give undue importance to it.

Subject-matter of Literary Criticism.

It is a settled rule of literary criticism that it should be a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas. Many good ideas take their rise in countries other than England. The English critic must therefore dwell much on those

foreign ideas, and his great concern must be knowledge and ever fresh knowledge. His services will be more useful to the reader when he passes these ideas on to him with his own judgment thereon. In certain cases where the subject matter does not admit of fresh knowledge he has to offer only his own judgment with explanations of the principles. But here the great safeguard is never to be abstract. He should always be conscious of the truth of what he is saying.

Now, some one may object that by critics and criticism we mean critics and criticism of the English literature of today. Arnold is not prepared to limit its scope to this extent. His own definition of criticism : "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" precludes him from so doing.

English Literature not to be Isolated from World Literature.

According to the above definition only a very small fraction of English literature comes up to that standard. Therefore one has to look up to the French and German literature also, as also the classic literature. For this purpose it is necessary to learn at least one great foreign literature, specially one that is unlike the critic's own literature. Literary criticism does not know geographical boundaries and so from the point of view of spiritual and intellectual purposes Europe should be regarded as one great confederation bound to joint action and working to a common result. Every critic must have a knowledge of Greek, Roman and Eastern classics. That nation will make most progress intellectually and spiritually which follows this programme. To repeat what has been said in the beginning : to have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and great proof of being alive, and a critic

may enjoys it a well, but his criticism must be sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever widening its knowledge, as compared with a poor, starved, fragmentary, inadequate creation, which can not satisfy a man of insight.

Notes and Explanations.

Function—duty peculiar to any office; exercise of faculty. *Proposition*—that which is proposed; that which is stated. *Homer*—the most famous of all epic poets; is supposed to have been a Greek who lived about 850 B.C. probably at Chios or Smyrna. *Ventured*—dared; attempted. *Intellect*—the thinking principle. *A critical effort*—an attempt to study a thing thoroughly to find out its good and bad features. *Endeavour*—an exertion of power towards some object; attempt. *Theology*—the science which treats of God and man's duty to him. *Owing to the operation of*—on account of. *Impaired*—weakened; diminished in value or strength. *Rejoinder*—an answer to a reply. *Assigned*—allotted to. *Excessive*—too much. *Asserted*—declared strongly. *Inherent*—natural; innate. *Critical effort*—as distinguished from "creative effort" is an endeavour to examine literature or art minutely to find out its real qualities. *I added, that owing ....criticism*—Discussing the importance of criticism I had further remarked that in England now a days, there is, due to certain causes, a dearth of literary criticism, a thing of which in Europe there is a great demand. *Creative effort*—an endeavour to produce original literature or art. *More than one rejoinder...........critical effort*—Many persons disputed my remarks about the importance of criticism and declared with force that the endeavour to produce original pieces of literature such as poems, plays etc, was much superior to the effort of merely criticising the

existing things, and that I had exaggerated the importance of criticism. *Profoundest*—deepest.

Disparagement—talking slightingly of ; lowering in estimation or rank. *To justify......of it*—the remark of Wordsworth implied that the art of criticism deserved every sort of dispraise and should be looked down upon. *Prosecute their inglorious employment*—carry on their unworthy business of criticism. *Inglorious*—unworthy ; without honour : shameful. *Genuine*—pure. *While they prosecute.....poetry*—Wordsworth means to say that in order to be able to estimate the value of a piece of genuine poetry one must be inspired by the same ideas as the poet himself. The ordinary critics who have adopted it as a profession to write critical notes on literature to be published in journals are not in a position to appreciate correctly the fine influences of real poetry. *Elaborate*—detailed. *Infinitely*—without limit ; boundless. *Inventive*—creative. *Wordsworth holds......inventive*—Wordsworth is of the opinion that the art of passing judgments on the writings of others is incomparably inferior to that of writing original pieces of literature. *Consumed*—spent *Critique*—a review ; a critical examination of any production. *It would make...... level*—an attempt to produce an original thing will soon make a man know his depth, *i.e.* his ability. *Malicious*—based on ill will. *Stupid invention*—a foolish or absurd production. *Impotence*—powerlessness. *Voluntarily doom himself to impotence*—would willingly spoil his career by attempting to do what he is unable to. *Obscurity*—a state of being unknown. *In another*—in another line. *Should for the greater........in another*—It is very difficult for a man who has some experience in one line of literature to give it up for the sake of the better interests of the society and

take up another line in which he can do nothing. *Addicted to*—used to ; habitnated to do something bad, e.g. addicted to gambling. *Critical faculty.....inventive*—that the power of criticism is inferior to the power of original production.

Baneful—destructive ; injurious. *Composition*—writing. *Johnson*—Dr. Samud Johnson (1709—84) the great exicographer (dictionary writer) and writer, who for a number of years was the most prominent literary man in England. Besides his dictionary he was the anthor of *Vanity of Human Wishes, Rasselas, Lives of Poets,* etc. He was greatly honoured during his life, received a pension of £ 300/- a year from 1762. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. James Boswell has written his biography which is rated as the best biography. As a critic Johnson is very famous. *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*—sonnets relating to the church or religion. *Celebrated*—famous. *Celebrated Preface*—the famous preface to his famous book *Prelude*, published in 1791, which is a very fine piece of criticism. *Goeth*—Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749—1832). the most distinguished of German poets and writers. His famous dramatic poem *Faust* is one of the world's greatest literary works. *Trace*—find out, *Assenting to*—agreeing with. *Undeniable*—indisputable.

If it were not so.........all men—Free creative activity does not mean simply producing works of literature or art ; it may be exercised in other ways also, as in criticism. If criticism which itself is a source of pleasure to the critic is danied its, legitimate place in literature then a number of men will be deprived of enjoying true happiness which they could by exercising their critical power. *Epoch*—period of time remarkable for important events ; here,

time. *Vainly*—uselessly, because in the absence of the necessary conditions the excercise of creative power cannot achieve any thing. *Manisestation*—display ; revelation. *At any rate.........fruitful*—In any case we may lay down as a certain rule that unless the necessary elements, *viz.* the best ideas, are present, no display or exercise of the power of creation can result in the production of any important work. *Accessible*—within reach ; ready at Land. *For creative literary.........ideas*—It is not the chief function of creative literary genius to create new ideas. *Synthesis*—the combination of separate elements of thought into a whole. *Exposition*—explanation ; clarification. *Analysis*—resolving or separating a thing into its elements or component parts—the tracing of things to their souace and so discovering the general principles under lying individual phenomena. Its converse is *synthesis*. *The grand work.... discovery*—We cannot expect that a highly gifted literary man will analyse things and discover ideas ; his most important work is to combine separate elements of thought into a whole and to explain them. *Its gifts ties.........in them*—Creative literary genius does not work at will ; it has to wait till a suitable atmosphere inspires it with a certain chain of ideas and then it shows itself at its best by arranging them in the best manner.

Dealing divinely——dealing with much reverence as though they were inspired by Divine authority. *Creative epoches*—periods when the atmosphere is favourable for producing original literature in abundance. *Concur*—agree ; work in agreement. *The power to the moment—i e.*, the necessary atmosphere. *Thus it tends.........avail itself*—It is a function of the critical power to see the object as minutely as possible in all branches of learning. Having done

so it paves the way for the creation of an atmosphere and an intellictual situation which a skilled writer uses to his best advantage. *It tends to establish..........literature*— Here the writer shows how critical power prepares the ground for creative activity in abundance by establishing a new order of ideas and throwing the old one away. These new ideas are grasped by the society with such a zeal and fervour that they create a commotion, which in turn brings about a creative epoch in literature. *Quit*—leave ; keep aside. *Apt—likely*. *Impalpable*—not easily understood.

Complex—not simple ; intricate. *Implies a great....... it*—Life and the world are now so intricate that a poet can not deal with them unless he has observed them from every angle ; and this is pure critical activity. *Has so little endurance in it*—its popularity cannot last long. *Nourished*—got support from. *Goethe's was nourished...was not*—Goethe lived in a period when there had been great critical activity in Germany and he had all that literature before him to make full use of it, but in Byron's time there had not been any such activity in England. *Comprehensively*—fully. *Burstofcreativeactivity*—asuddenproduction of original literary works in abundance. *Premature*—happening before the proper time. *Doomed*—i.e. doomed to failure. *Sanguine hopes*—fond hopes and expectations. *And the prematureness ...work with*—The reason why these productions are not mature is that the writers had not the proper materials at their command on which to base their activity. *Did not know enough*—the poets had not sufficient knowledge of the then existing literature. *Incoherent*—loose ; rambling. *Profound*—deep, *Disparaged*—spoke slightingly of.

Immense—that cannot be measured ; very much. *Pindar*—(522--442 B.c.) the eminent lyric poet of ancient Greece. *Sophocles*—(495—406 B.c.) the famous Athanian

dramatist who enjoyed the highest popularity at Athens and in a contest with Aschylus was crowned the victor. He wrote more than one hundred plays of which only seven have survived. They are :- *Elector*, *Oedipus*, *Ajax Trachinde Philoctetes* etc. *Glibly*—fluently. *Discernment*—understanding. *Import*—meaning. *Animating*—giving life. *But in the Greece of Pindar...,.creative power*—Pindar and Sophocles in Greece and Shakespeare in England lived in a period when a current of ideas enlivened and strengthened the poet's creative power in the highest degree and so inspite of the fact that they had not much book learning they have produced the finest literature. *Permeated*—saturated with ; filled with. *This*—i.e. the atmosphere of literary ideas. *Even when this does not....work*—The absence of such an atmosphere of literary ideas may, to an extent, be offset by vast book knowledge, in which case the poet can create something resembling it in his own mind and with the help of his acquired knowledge and intelligence he is enabled to produce fine literature. *Diffused*—spread. *This is by no means....Shakespeare*—Of Course this atmosphere created by the poet for himself is not the same thing as the living atmosphere of literary ideas which filled the mind of the whole nation in the days of Sophocles or Shakespeare.

Quickening—reviving. *Sustaining*—maintaining ; giving life. *It does really constitu te...value*—Still the atmosphere created by the poet, if it is shared by a number of men, is of great value for a preparation to bring about the epochs of creative activity. *Athens*—Capital of modern Greece was in ancient times a seat of learning and science. *Pericles*—(490—429 B.c,) the distinguished Athenian statesman general and orator who raised Athens to the highest prosperity. *Unfettered*—free. *This was his strength*—i.e. Goethe

received great support from the literature of a vast number of German thinkers in the field of criticism. *Therefore the creative power...denied to it*—The result was that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the materials necessary for the exercise of the creatvie power of poetry to the fullest extent, such as a thorough knowledge of the world, and the ability to explain it, were not available to the poets. *Burke*—Edmund Burke (1729-1797), the son of a Dublin athorney, went to London in 1756 and made his mark in literature by his famous work. *Sublime and Beautiful*—and later on entered Parliament, where he quickly made a name. He was an able and earnest debater, became famous in connection with his *Speech on the Impeachment of Warran Hastings.* He also wrote *Thoughts on French Affairs. Saturates*—fills. *Accident*—chance. *Burke is so great. . . . . . .thought*—Burke's greatness was due to the fact that he was the only person in England who based politics on reason and logic. *Epoch of concentration*—a period in which thoughts are confined to party interests. *Epochs of expansion*—a period when people take a broader view of things. *Welling up with him*—at his command. *Dr. Price*—(1723-1791), a nonconformist divine, whom Burke attacks for his republican principles in his *Reflections on the French Revolution. Enchanted*—charmed. *Catchwords*—words used as symbols of a party ; slogans.

So far is it......mankind—It is not at all true that Burke spent all his energy for the service of his party instead of mankind in general. *Invectives*—severe or reproachfui accusatims brought against a person or party. *Conviction*—strong belief. *Combating*—fighting. *Persist*—obstinately continue. *Perverse*—stubborn; obstinate in the wrong. *If a great change..... of men*—One fact clearly

shows the broad mindedness of Burke. Having written much against the French Revolution and having levelled all charges against the persons responsible for it, he admits that if a great change is going to be made in human affairs it will naturally make people adapt themselves to it, and they will think on that line. All their hopes and fears will depend on it and they will do all they can to make it a success. Those persons who will try to oppose such a strong wave of public zeal will try in vain as they will be trying to resist what God has already ordained. *Return of Burke upon himself*—changing his own views.

Balaam—the prophet who came to curse but remained to bless. *Un-English*—Contrary to the character of an Englishman. *Anomaly*—irregularity ; deviation from the rule. *For the Englishman......whatever*—Because the characteristic of an Englishman, in general, is 'that he is thoroughly practical, and like members of Parliament, he does not hesitate for a moment in believing that a thing may be accepeted even though it seems to be absurd or foolish. *Lord Auckland* (1743—1814) a Tory peer and diplomat, a warm supporter of Pitt the younger. *Certain miscreants*—some wrong headed persons bent on doing mischief, *i e.* the persons who planned the French Revolution, and were guiding it. *Assuming the name of philosophers*—*i.e.* falsely calling themselves as political thinkers. *Presumed*—taken for granted ; supposed. *This would be ......intelligence*—*i.e.* the Englishman's dislike of ideas and thinkers is not confined to politics alone; it is extended to all intellectual and literary activity. *Transported*—taken away. *Inanition*—exhaustion from want of food or nourishment. *Curiosity*—desire to learn.

Disparaging one—*i e.* used in bad sense. *I say that... ...disparaging one*—The word "curiosity" is used in other

languages in a good sense, *viz.* "a desire to learn," but in English it is used in a bad sense e,g. trying to find out the secrets of others. *It obeys an instinct....world—i.e.* curiosity leads a man to use his critical power in seeing things in their best light. *Intrusion*—meddling ; interference. *Benumbing period of blight*—a period in which all critical activity is paralysed. *Suppression*—stifling of truth. *Amicably*—peacefully. *Infinitesimally*—infinctely small. *Brutalising*—degrading. *Apparition*—appearance.

In the first place......intellectual life—There are three reasons which lead us to think that a period of expansion is about to come in England. *Firstly*, the danger that foreign ideas will forcitly affect our modes of working has long disappeared, and now we are at liberty to think in any way we like. *Secondly*, a long period of peace and good relations with other countries, has enabled ideas from European Countries to enter peaceably and in very small quantities in our own ways of thinking. *Thirdly*, in spite of the fact that we so much under-rate our material progress, this progress itself may become a cause of the coming into existence of an era of wisdom and learning.

Discern—see. *Privilege*—an advantage to an individual ; a right enjoyed by only a few. *Faith*—firm belief. *To canvass*—to sift ; to examine. *To penetrate*—to understand ; to find out. *All tend to beget...their nature*—The cumulative effect of all these is that we are inclined to think a little more freely and try to examine carefully and to understand our notions with a view to know their real nature. *Flutterings of curiosity*—a desire to know the real nature of things, (and this is the beginning of criticism). *Criticism first......work*—Therefore it is clear that criticism has an importance of its own. It paves the way for creative

activity. Criticism comes first and when it has done its work the ground is prepared for original production. *Disinterestedness*—*i.e.*, the mind should be impartial, unbiased and not influenced by practical considerations. *Resolutely*—firmly. *Ulterior*—very remote; beyond what is seen.

Inflexible honesty—unwavering straight-forwardness. *Prominence*—importance. *In the old rut*—in the long trodden narrow path, *i.e.*, old unprogressive fashion. *Bane*—poison; injurious effect. *Cling*—adhere to. *Stifle*—somther. *It is that . . . .stiflle it*—In England the thing which causes an injurious effect on criticism is that people are not impartial and unbiassed. They are influenced by practical considerations. *Organs*—journals and periodicals. *Compatible with*—consistent with; agreeable. *So much play of mind.......wanted*—Our journals which are run on lines of party politics think that only so much free play of the mind as is consistent with the advancement of the practical ends of the party is sufficient. *Revue des Deux Mondes*—name of a French journal of criticism (Review of the two Worlds).

Political Dissenters—*i. e.*, political thinkers who follow an independent policy. *Extinction*—ceasing publication, literally, destruction. *Sub-serve*—serve as a means to protect their interests. *But it would be well...of them*—Side by side with these party organs there should be an organ devoted to disinterested criticism, which should neither serve their interests nor be adverse to them, but should be absolutely impartial and free.

Detached itsef—Kept itself aloof. *Polemical*—Contreversial, given to disputing. *Controversial*—given to disputation. *Retarding*—Keeping back; slackening the progress, *Vulgarising*—making vulgar or rude. *It is because criticism......things*—Because criticism in England has not

been disinterested, it has not confined itself to pure intellectual activity, has not kept itself aloof from practical considerations, has assumed a quarelling nature ready to enter disputes, it has failed to accomplish the spiritual work which was so essential for raising it to the highest intellectual level, by concentrating on what is perfect and beautiful, and guarding it against degrading itself and becoming vulgar. *A polemical practical......practice*—When criticism assumes a quarelling nature and is influenced by practical considerations, men are unable to see the shortcomings and ideal imperfection of their own practice. *Makes them ....perfection*—On the contrary they insist that it is perfect notwithstanding several defects. *Baneful*—injurious. *Speculative*—thought provoking. *Sir Charles Adderley*—(1814—1905) Known as Lord Norton, held several offices connected with education and colonies.

Breed—race. *Enervating*—weakening. *The absence.., .. climate*—because the climate in England does not weaken a man.

Unrivalled—unparallelled ; having no rival to be compared with. *Peril*—danger. *Exuberant*—overfollowing, lavish. *Celestial City*—paradise. *Des wenige etc*—a quotation from Goethe, the translation of which appears in the next line. *Seubtle*—artful ; ingenious. *Prescribing*—laying down as a rule. *Embracing*—including. *Indian virtue of detachment*—the habit of the Indian Sadhus to keep aloof from worldly affairs. *Ardent*—passionate; burning. *The mass ......them*—Men in general do not care to observe things minutely ; they are satisfied with very insufficient and imperfect ideas. *Reposes*—rests ; depends. *Dizzying*—making giddy ; confusing. *Collected*—cool minded. *Vortex*—whirlpool. *The rush and rour........vortex*—The

hustle and bustle of life makes the mind of even the most cool minded spectator giddy and throws him into the whirlpool so that he is no better than the masses.

Remaining collected—Keeping oneself cool. *Humanitarian sphere*—The sphere of activities relating to human service. *Speculative treatment of things*—dealing with things in a philosophical manner. *Irresistible*—which cannot be opposed with success. *I say, the critic............manner*—I say that for a critic, if he wants to make a good beginning in the matter of dealing with things in a free and philosophied manner, it is necessary that he should keep away from all practical considerations in political, social and humanitarian affairs. If he does so he will some day find that the practice yields fruitful result even in the sphere of criticism, and this is achieved without any great exertion and in a manner that it cannot be resisted or opposed with success.

Indisposed to—not inclined to ; not disposed to. *To comprehend*——to understand. *Immersed*——plunged in ; engaged deeply in. *Impertinent*—impudent. *Singularity*——peculiarity ; any thing curious or remarkable. *So immersed are they..............any other*—Englishmen look at life from a practical point of view. They are accustomed to this to such an extent that they believe that all their ideas spring from this mode of life and that likewise truth and culture too can be achieved by applying practical considerations. Therefore, any other method of reaching truth and culture is absurd and out of the question. *Terrae filli*——sons of the soil. *Philistines*——ancient inhabitants of south west Palestine, enemies of Israelities ; uncultured persons (pretanding to know much).

Intellectual delicaly—niceties of the mode of thinking. *Applaud him*—praise him. *Scandal*—something said which is false and injurious to character ; disgrace ; general feeling that something is an outrage. *In this way.......little thought*—If the idea of organising a party on the lines stated above be accepted, it will mean that the achievement of truth is also something like a social and practical affair and can be achieved through committees with chairmen, sceretarie's etc. There may arise moments when an evil and malicious report injures the reputation of some one and causes a little excitement and fun. With a little effort they try to settle the matter and are satisfied. In this way there can be much noise without any intellectual progress. *To go with the stream*—to follow the general public. *Ungenerous*—not dignified. *Terrae filius*—(singular) son of the soil. *Obermann*—a character in a French novel who lived alone in a valley in Switzerland.

Elementary—primary. *Impoverishing*—making poor ; having a starving effect.

Flexible—that which can he easily bent ; that which can easily mould itself to the circumstances of the moment. *Maleficent*—criminal ; injurious. *Beneficent*——a kindly act. *Playing off.......the other*—trying to bring about a clash between two powers. *Want of ardour*—lack of zeal. *Canvassed*—discussed ; examined throughly. *To remodel ....first principles*—to reshape them according to the original doctrines. *Spiritual flagging*—declining of interest in spiritual sphere. *Ardent*——zealons ; enthusiastic. *In inseparable connection with politics and practical life*—every thing was looked at from the point of view of practical and political utility. *Serener*—more calm.

For maturing a little—if we have waited enough till our ideas are a little more ripe. *Attitude*—way of thinking. *Here in general its course.........true ideas*—Arnold in this sentence expresses his opinion as to what is the correct line of criticism. This is very important to note. *Must dwell much on foreign thought*—must pay great attention on ideas expressed in foreign languages. *Significanl*—expressive of something ; important. *To escape him*—not to come to his notice. *Insensibly*—unconsciously.

Clue—that which solves a mystery. *Aud it is by communicating..........readers*—This is also an important observation made by Arnold. He says that when a critic forms an opinion on auy subject and passes it on to others along with any fresh idea discovered by him, he must not assume an authoritative tone like that of a lawgiver, but should pass it as a mere guide or a key to a mystery, and in this way he will be of real service to his readers. *Enunciation*—a clear statement of a rule. *Abstract*—general ; abstruse ; theoritical. *Intimate*—close. *Tautological*—needless repetition of the same thing in different words ; addition of words that add nothing to the sense. *Still, under all circumstances.......activity*—The critic must always bear in mind that mere enunciation of a rule or the expression of an opinion is not enough to help the reader in finding out the true sense of creative activity ; it is nothing more than repeating a thing in different words. *To address yourself*—to confine your attention to.

Alien practical considerations—considerations based on practice which have nothing to do with pure literary criticism. *One may say......the better*—There are people who pose as critics by eonfining their attention to the mass of the current English literature, most of which

should be thrown aside, and think that they can succeed by applying the standard, *viz.* to know the best that is known and thought in the world. To them it may be said that they cannot become good critics unless they knew at least one foreign literature, specially a literature that is different from their own. *Confederation*—a union of several states for certain purposes. *Eastern antiquity*—ancient eastern classics.

To have the sense of creative activity......to have it—It is true that a man feels great happiness when he knows that he has the power to exercise his creative activity, and this is a proof of his being full of life and activity ; the same happiness is felt by a critic also. *In no contemptible measure*—not in a negligible quantity ; not too little. *Starved*—stunted. *Frag mentary*—consisting of fragment or pieces ; broken ; incomplete. *No other creation*- production of no other literature except the critical literature. *In a full measure*——wholly. *Genuine creation*——pure original production.

Inspiration—superior, elevating or exciting influence. *Under-rate*—under-value. *Aeschylus*—the father of the Greek tragic drama (525—456 *B.C.*). He composed several plays and gained the prizes for dramatic excellence thirteen times. *Pre-eminence*—superiority in excellence. *Beckon*—to make a sign to ; to invite attention to. *Wilderness*—a wild or waste place. *Contemporaries*—persons living at the same time. *Posterity*—Coming generations. *Promised land*—the land promised by God to prophet Abraham (peace be on him) and his descendents. *The epochs of Aeschylus.............with posterity*—The periods in which Aeschylus and Shakespeare lived were the periods in which there was national glow of life and literature made great progress. These periods have always outshined on account

of their superior and excellent literature. During such epochs literature thrives, and even now the promised land (the highest reward) is within sight and it is the business of criticism to lead us to it. We may not be able to make any progress and may be led astray to face utter failure. Even if we cannot reach that highest stage we must always endeavour to come as near it as possible so that we may acquire some distinction amongst our contemporaries, and deserve the respect of the coming generations.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. 1 "If the quantity of time consumed in writing critiques on works of others were given to the original compositlon of whatever kind it might be, it would be much better employed." Discuss this remark and show to what extent it is true.

Ans. When Matthew Arnold said that the English literature of his day was sadly lacking in critical effort, as compared with the literature of France and Germany, many brows were knit and several objections raised. It was said that the creative effort was inherently superior to the critical effort. To support this view, one Mr. Shairp quoted Wordsworth's openion on the subject. The sentence reproduced above (in the question) is attributed to that famous poet. it implies that all time spent in criticism of whatever quality is wasted and all time spent in writing some thing original is well spent even though the product is mediocre,

If Wordrworth has been correctly reported, it is a matter of surprise, because he himseif was a good critic as is proved by his famous *Prface*. Goethe the renowned German poet was a greater critic and Dr. Samuel Johnsons fame is based more on his critical effort as shown in his *Livis of the Poets* than his original writings. It may be that Wordsworth's opinion was influcnced by the English criticism of his time which was generally partial and prejudiced. This is why he said that "false or malicions criticism may do much injury to the minds of others, a

stupid invention, either in prose or verse, is quite harmless". Now it can be admitted that a false or malicious criticism is not worth the paper on which it is written.

The question arises : Is all criticism of whatever quality useless ? The answer cannot be in the affirmative. Granted that as a general rule the critical faculty is lower than the inventive. But criticism has its own place in literature ; its sphere is well defined. It is also true that a man feels a sense of pleasure in exercising his free creative activity, but this can be exercised in other ways than writing great books. It may be exercised in criticising. It may be borne in mind that creative activity is not fruitful at all times and under all conditions. There have been epochs of excellent creative activity as those of Sophocles and Shakespeare, and also epochs when there has been no such activity. Creative activity is based on two factors—the power of the man and the power of the moment. The power of the man is not enough without the power of the moment. The power of the moment includes the requisite atmosphere when fresh ideas are inspired in a certain order and the literary genius presents them in the most attractive and effective manner.

The critical faculty has not to wait for such moments. It has before it sufficient material in the form of the existing literature on which to work. But criticism has to follow certain rules. It must be impartial, unprejudiced, and disinterested. A critic must keep aloof from practical, political and social considerations. He must not allow himself to be swept away by the current of public opinion. True criticism, if it is to be of any use, is "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known

and thought in the world." If a critic works on those lines he prepares the ground for creative and inventive activity. Thus it is that epochs of great creative activity are preceded by epochs of critical activity, Therefore, the sweeping statement that all time spent in criticism is wasted is sheer exaggeration and not true. We may look at it from another point of view. All persons are not given to examine all things critically ; they are satisfied with what is said and done by the people in general Thus they can have only a very superficial knowledge of what is good and beautiful. Only a few persons are able to discern the hidden qualities, of things. They are the critics. They try to find out "the best that is known and thought in the world" and communicate their ideas to others, explaining them and deducing rules from them. Thus they are of service not only to themselves but also to others, including those who are busy in exercising their inventive power. Critical activity is therefore, a step in the direction of creative activity.

Q. 2. What was the attitude of an average Englishman towards literary criticism in the earlier part of the nineteenth century ? What were its causes ?

Ans. An average Englishman, in the earlier part of the nineteenth century was averse to literary criticism. He thought that it performed no useful purpose. It was believed that the critical power was of a lower rank than the creative power, and so it did not deserve any great attention. A remark made by William Wordsworth to the effect that all time spent in writing critiques was wasted, was eagerly grasped as an authoritative statement and the last word on the subject. *Curiosity*, the desire to learn and know a thing, being used in other languages

in a good sense as a high and fine quality of man's ! nature, the disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects for its own sake, was used in the English language in a rather disparaging sense. But criticism, real criticism, is essentially the exercise of this very quality. It prompts a man to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, ignoring the practical and political considerations, and any thing of the kind. It has the force of an instinct, but an Englishman of those days had no sympathy for this instinct.

This was due to the innate disposition of an Englishman who is called "a political animal, and he values what is political and pratical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers "mis : creants," because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice." This was literally true of the Englishman of Arnold's time. For example, the French Revolution, the aim and object of which was to do away with monarchy and introduce republican form of Government in France, was thoroughly against the English way of thinking. The sponsors of the revolution were called "miscreants, assuming the name of philosophers," because they "presumed themselves capable of establishing a new system of society." And the French Revolution was in the opinion of Burke destined to succeed, and it did succeed.

The habit of thinking in terms of practical and political considerations was not confined to politics and to ideas of foreign origin, but was extneded to all intellectual activity. Practice was supposed to be everything and a free play of the mind nothing. To know the best that is thought and known in the world is not possible unless a man is absolutely disinterested, impartial and unprejudic-

ed. But an Englishman was brought up in an atmosphere where this was not possible. The society was divided into various parties—the Whigs, the Tories, the Dissenters and others. All the journals from which one could expect free and independent criticism belonged to various parties. The *Edingburgh* Review was an organ of the Whigs, the *Quarterly Review* of the Tories, the British Quarterly Review of the Political Dissenters and so on. There was no such independent journal as the French *Reveue des Deux Mondes*. The only independent English journal *Home and Foreign Review* had ceased publication. All the current English journals were run on party lines and allowed only so much criticism as was compatible with their policy and interests. In such circumstances free and independant criticism was not possible.

The Englishman is reputed to be conservative and does not like any change in the old habits and practices. He was thus not inclined even to comprehend that without free, disinterested treatment of things, truth and the highest culture were out of the question. He thought that truth and culture could be reached by following old practices and to think of any other method was sheer nonsense. He would like to organise a party and name it *the liberal party*, where every member would support every other member whether he was right or wrong, and would not have the nonsense about independent criticism. Thus in the early part of the nineteenth century criticism was not given the attention it deserved.

Q. 3. What is the chief function of criticism according to Matthew Arnold and how is it to be achieved ?

Answer. After making a comparative study of the literature of Europe in General and that of France and Germany in particular, Mathew Arnold remarked that absence of critical activity in England impaired the English literature whereas in other countries it was a source of enriching it. Many objections were raised against this remark, but they were based on misunderstending and false assumptions. Having dealt with these objections he asserts that criticism has an importance of its own which cannot be minimised. Criticism lays the foundation for creative activity, because the critical activity comes first and creative activity afterwards.

Arnold defines "criticism" as : *"a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world."* That being the chief aim of criticism, the question arises : What rule should be adopted in order that criticism should serve its purpose fruitfully ? The answer is that the rule is, in one ward, *disinterestedness*, and disinterestedness means that criticism must keep aloof from what is called "the practical view of things," and follow the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. It must steadily refuse to bend itself to utterior, political and practical considerations about ideas. which may appear to many as important, but have nothing to do with it. As the business of criticism is to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to create a current of true and fresh ideas it must discharge its duty with inflexible honesty and due ability.

Criticism must in no circumstances become polemical or controversial, because a polemical practical criticism

makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of their practice. It must be unbiassed, impartial and unprejudiced. It must observe complete independence of thought. It must not yield even to well-meant efforts of the practical spirit if they seem to impoverish and limit its ideal. It must be patient and flexible and know how to attach itself to things and how to withdraw from them.

Disinterestedness also implies that a critic must take a broader view of things. He should not limit his activity to the English literature alone, because only a fraction of that literature can come within this "best that is known and thought in the world." He should include within his sphere other literature also. For this purpose he will do well if he has a knowledge of at least one other literature besides his own. A knowledge of Greek, Roman and Eastern classics will be of help to him. For the purpose of intellectual and spiritual progress he should think Europe as one great confederation bound to a joint action and working to a common result. In this way can criticism achieve its main purpose of learning and propagating the best that is known and thought in the world.

I

THE STUDY OF POETRY

"THE future of poetry is immense, because in poetry where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact ; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything ; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea ; the idea *is* the fact. The strongest part of our religion to-day is its unconscious poetry."

Let me be permitted to quote these words of my own, as uttering the thought which should, in my opinion, go with us and govern us in all our study of poetry. In the present work it is the course of one great contributory stream to the world-river of poetry that we are invited to follow. We are here invited to trace the stream of English poetry. But whether we set ourselves, as here, to follow only one of the several streams that make the mighty river of poetry, or whether we seek to know them all, our governing thought should be the same. We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the

1. Published in 1880 as the General Introduction to *The English Poets*, edited by T. H. Ward.

custom to conceive of it. We should conceive of it as capable of higher uses, and called to higher destinies, than those which in general men have assigned to it hitherto, More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science"; and what is a countenance without its expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge": our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being; what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge" offered to us by poetry.

But if we conceive thus highly of the destinies of poetry. we must also set our standard for poetry high, since poetry, to be capable of fulfilling such high destinies, must be poetry of a high order of excellence. We must accustom ourselves to a high standard and to a strict judgment. Sainte-Beuve relates that Napoleon one day said, when somebody was spoken of in his presence as a charlatan: "Charlatan as much as you please; but where is there *not* charlatanism?"—"Yes," answers Sainte-Beuve, "in politics,

in the art of governing mankind, that is perhaps true. But in the order of thought, in art, the glory, the eternal honour is that charlatanism shall find no entrance; herein lies the inviolableness of that noble portion of man's being." It is admirably said, and let us hold fast to it. In poetry, which is thought and art in one, it is the glory, the eternal honour, that charlatanism shall find no entrance; that this noble sphere be kept inviolate and inviolable. Charlatanism is for confusing or obliterating the distinctions between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true. It is charlatanism, conscious or unconscious, whenever we confuse or obliterate these. And in poetry, more than anywhere else, it is unpermissible to confuse or obliterate them. For in poetry the distinction between excellent and inferior, sound and unsound or only half-sound, true and untrue or only half-true, is of paramount importance. It is of paramount importance because of the high destinies of poetry. In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life. And the criticism of life will be of power in proportion as the poetry conveying it is excellent rather than inferior, sound rather than unsound or half-sound, true rather than untrue or half-true.

The best poetry is what we want; the best poetry will be found to have a power of forming, sustaining, and delighting us, as nothing else can. A clearer, deeper sense of the best in poetry, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, is the most precious benefit which we can gather

from a poetical collection such as the present. And yet in the very nature and conduct of such a collection there is inevitably something which tends to obscure in us the consciousness of what our benefit should be, and to distract us from the pursuit of it. We should therefore steadily set it before our minds at the outset, and should compel ourselves to revert constantly to the thought of it as we proceed.

Yes ; constantly, in reading poetry, a sense for the best, the really excellent, and of the strength and joy to be drawn from it, should be present in our minds and should govern our estimate of what we read. But this real estimate, the only true one, is liable to be superseded, if we are not watchful, by two other kinds of estimate, the historic estimate and the personal estimate, both of which are fallacious. A poet or a poem may count to us historically, they may count to us on grounds personal to overselves, and they may count to us really. They may count to us historically. The course of development of a nation's language, thought, and poetry, is profoundly interesting ; and by regarding a poet's work as a stage in this course of development we may easily bring ourselves to make it of more importance as poetry than in itself it really is, we may come to use a language of quite exaggerated praise in criticising it; in short, to overrate it. So arises in our poetic judgments the fallacy caused by the estimate which we may call historic. Then, again, a poet or a poem may count to us on grounds personal to ourselves. Our personal affinities, likings, and circumstances have great power to sway our estimate of this or that poet's work, and to make us attach more importance to it as poetry than in itself it really possesses, because to us it is, or has been, of high importance. Here also we overrate the object of our interest, and apply to it a langu-

age of praise which is quite exaggerated. And thus we get the source of a second fallacy in our poetic judgments—the fallacy caused by an estimate which we may call personal.

Both fallacies are natural. It is evident how naturally the study of the history and development of a poetry may incline a man to pause over reputations and works once conspicuous but now obscure, and to quarrel with a careless public for skipping, in obedience to mere tradition and habit from one famous name or work in its national poetry to another, ignorant of what it misses, and of the reason for keeping what it keeps, and of the whole process of growth in its poetry. The French have become diligent students of their own early poetry, which they long neglected; the study makes many of them dissatisfied with their so-called classical poetry, the court-tragedy of the seventeenth century, a poetry which Pellisson long ago reproached with its want of the true poetic stamp, with its *politesse sterile et rampante*, but which nevertheless has reigned in France as absolutely as if it had been the perfection of classical poetry indeed. The dissatisfaction is natural; yet a lively and accomplished critic, M. Charles d'Hericault, the editor of Clement Marot, goes too far when he says that "the cloud of glory playing round a classic is a mist as dangerous to the future of a literature as it is intolerable for the purposes of history." "It hinders," he goes on, "it hinders us from seeing more than one single point, the culminating and exceptional point; the summary, fictitious and arbitrary, of a thought and of a work. It substitutes a halo for a physiognomy, it puts a statue where there was once a man and, hiding from us all trace of the labour, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures, it claims not study but veneration; it does not show us how the thing is done, it imposes upon us a model. Above all, for the historian this creation of

classic personages is inadmissible ; for it withdraws the poet from his time, from his proper life, it breaks historical relationships, it blinds criticism by conventional admiration, and renders the investigation of literary origins unacceptable. It gives us a human personage no longer, but a God seated immovable amidst His perfect work, like Jupiter on Olympus ; and hardly will it be possible for the young student, to whom such work is exhibited at such a distance from him, to believe that it did not issue ready made from that divine head."

All this is brilliantly and tellingly said, but we must plead for a distinction. Everything depends on the reality of a poet's classic character. If he is a dubious classic, let us sift him ; if he is a false classic, let us explode him. But if he is a real classic, if his work belongs to the class of the very best (for this is the true and right meaning of the word *classic, classical*), then the great thing for us is to feel and enjoy his work as deeply as ever we can, and to appreciate the wide difference between it and all work which has not the same high character. This is what is salutary, this is what is formative ; this is the great benefit to be got from the study of poetry. Everything which interferes with it, which hinders it, is injurious. True, we must read our classic with open eyes, and not with eyes blinded with superstition ; we must perceive when his work comes short, when it drops out of the class of the very best, and we must rate it, in such cases, as its proper value. But the use of this negative criticism is not in itself, it is entirely in its enabling us to have a clearer sense and a deeper enjoyment of what is truly excellent. To trace the labour, the attempts, the weaknesses, the failures of a genuine classic, to acquaint oneself with his time and his life and his historical relation-

ships, is mere literary dilettantism unless it has that clear sense and deeper enjoyment for its end. It may be said that the more we know about a classic the better we shall enjoy him ; and, if we lived as long as Methuselah and had all of us heads of perfect clearness and wills of perfect steadfastness, this might true in fact as it is plausible in theory. But the case here is much the same as the case with the Greek and Latin studies of our schoolboys. The elaborate philological groundwork which we require them to lay is in theory an admirable preparation for appreciating the Greek and Latin authors worthily. The more thoroughly we lay the groundwork, the better we shall be able, it may be said, to enjoy the authors. True, if time were not so short, and schoolboys' wits not so soon tired and their power of attention exhausted ; only, as it is, the elaborate philological preparation goes on, but the authors are little known and less enjoyed. So with the investigator of "historic origins" in poetry. He ought to enjoy the true classic all the better for his investigations ; he often is distracted from the enjoyment of the best, and with the less good he overbusies himself, and is prone to overrate it in proportion to the trouble which it has cost him.

The idea of tracing historic origins and historical relationships cannot be absent from a compilation like the present. And naturally the poets to be exhibited in it will be assigned to those persons for exhibition who are known to prize them highly, rather than to those who have no special inclination towards them. Moreover, the very occupation with an author, and the business of exhibiting him, disposes us to affirm and amplify his importance. In the present work, therefore, we are sure of frequent temptation to adopt the historic estimate, or the personal estimate, and to forget the real estimate ; which latter,

nevertheless, we must employ if we are to make poetry yield us its full benefit. So high is that benefit, the benefit of clearly feel ing and of deeply enjoying the really excellent, the truly classic in poetry, that we do well, I say, to set it fixedly before our minds as our object in studying poets and poetry, and to make the desire of attaining it the one principle to which, as the *Imitation* says, whatever we may read or come to know, we always return. *Cum multa legeris et cognoveris, ad unum semper oportet redire principium.*

The historic estimate is likely in especial to affect our judgment and our language when we are dealing with ancient poets ; the personal estimate when we are dealing with poets our contemporaries, or at any rate modern. The exaggerations due to the historic estimate are not in themselves, perhaps, of very much gravity. Their report hardly enters the general ear ; probably they do not always impose even on the literary men who adopt them. But they lead to a dangerous abuse of language. So we hear Caedmon, amongst our own poets, compared to Milton. I have already noticed the enthusiasm of one accomplished French critic for "historic origins." Another eminent French critic, M. Vitet, comments upon that famous document of the early poetry of his nation, the *Chanson de Roland*. It is indeed a most interesting document. The *joculator* or *jongleur* Taillefer, who was with William the Conqueror's army at Hastings, marched before the Norman troops, so said the tradition, singing "of Charlemagne and of Roland of Oliver, and of the vassals who died at Roncevaux" ; and it is suggested that in the *Chanson de Roland* by one Turoldus or Theroulde, a poem preserved in a manuscript of the twelfth century in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, we have certainly the matter, perhaps even some of the words, of the chant which

Taillefer sang. The poem has vigour and freshness ; it is not without pathos. But M. Vitet is not satisfied with seeing in it a document of some poetic value, and of very high historic and linguistic value ; he sees in it a grand and beautiful work, a monument of epic genius. In its general design he finds the grandiose conception, in its details he finds the constant union of simplicity with greatness, which are the marks, he truly says, of the genuine epic, and distinguish it from the artificial epic of literary ages. One thinks of Homer ; this is the sort of praise which is given to Homer, and justly given. Higher praise there cannot well be, and it is the praise due to epic poetry of the highest order only, and to no other. Let us try, then, the *Chanson de Roland* at its best. Roland, mortally wounded, lays himself down under a pine-tree, with his face turned towards Spain and the enemy ;—

"De plusurs choses a remembrer li prist,
De tantes teres cume li bers cunquist,
De dulce France, des humes de sun lign,
De Carlemagne sun seignor ki l'nurrit."*

That is primitive work, I repeat, with an undeniable poetic quality of its own. It deserves such praise, and such praise is sufficient for it. But now turn to Homer :—

"So said she ; they long since in Earth's soft arms were reposing,
There, in their own dear land, their fatherland, Lacedaemon."

Iliad, iii. 243, 244 (translated by Dr. Hawtrey),

*"Then began he to call many things to remembrance —all the lands which his valour conquered, and pleasant France, and the men of his lineage, and Charlemagne his liege lord who nourished him."—*Chanson de Roland*, iii. 939-942.

We are here in another world, another order of poetry altogether; here is rightly due such supreme praise as that which M. Vitet gives to the *Chan on de Roland.* if our words are to have any meaning, if our judgments are to have any solidity, we must not heap that supreme praise upon poetry of an order immeasurably inferior.

Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have always in one's mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. Of course we are not to require this other poetry to resemble them; it may be very dissimilar. But if we have any tact we shall find them, when we have lodged them well in our minds, an infallible touchstone for detecting the presence or absence of high poetic quality, and also the degree of this quality, in all other poetry which we may place beside them. Short passages, even single lines, will serve our turn quite sufficiently. Take the two lines which I have just quoted from Homer, the poet's comment on Helen's mention of her brothers;—or take his

"Ah, unhappy pair, why gave we you to King Peleus, to a mortal? but ye are without old age, and immortal. Was it that with men born in misery ye might have sorrow?"—*Iliad*, xvii. 443-445.

the address of Zeus to the horses of Peleus;—or take finally this

"Nay, and thou too, old man, in former days wast, as we hear, happy."—*Iliad*, xxiv. 543.

the words of Achilles to Priam, a suppliant before

him. Take that incomparable line and a half of Dante, Ugolino's tremendous words :—

> " Io no piangeva; si dentro impietrai.
> Piangevan elli . . ."*

take the lovely words of Beatrice to Virgil—

> " Io son fatta da Dio, sua merce, tale,
> Che la vostra miseria non mi tange,
> Ne fiamma d' esto incendio non m' assale . . ."**

take the simple, but perfect, single line—

> "In la sua volontade e nostra pace." ***

Take of Shakespeare a line or two of Henry the Fourth's expostulation with sleep—

> " Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge . . ."

and take, as well, Hamlet's dying request to Horatio—

> " If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent three from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw they breath in pain
> To tell my story . . ."

Take of Milton that Miltonic passage—

* "I wailed not, so of stone grew I within ;—*they* wailed."—*Inferno* xxxiii. 39, 40.

** "Of such sort hath God, thanked be His mercy, made me, that your misery toucheth me not, neither doth the flame of this fire strike me."—*Inferno*. ii. 91-93.

*** "In His will is our peace."—*Paradiso*, iii. 85.

"Darken'd so, yet shone
Above them all the archangel; but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care
Sat on his faded cheek . . ."

add two such lines as—

"And courage never to submit or yield
And what is else not to be overcome . . ."

and finish with the exquisite close to the loss of Proserpine, the loss

". . . which cost Ceres all that pain
To seek her through the world."

These few lines, if we have tact and can use them, are enough even of themselves to keep clear and sound our judgments about poetry, to save us from fallacious estimates of it, to conduct us to a real estimate.

The specimens I have quoted differ widely from one another, but they have in common this: the possession of the very highest poetical quality. If we are thoroughly penetrated by their power, we shall find that we have acquired a sence enabling us, whatever poetry may be laid before us, to feel the degree in which a high poetical quality is present or wanting there. Critics give themselves great labour to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples;—to take specimens of poetry of the high, the very highest, quality, and to say: The characters of a high quality of poetry are what is expressed *there*. They are far better recognised by being felt in the verse of the master, than by being perused in the prose of the critic. Nevertheless if we

are urgently pressed to give some critical account of them, we may safely, perhaps, venture on laying down, not indeed how and why the characters arise, but where and in what they arise. They are in the matter and substance of the poetry, and they are in its manner and style. Both of these, the substance and matter on the one hand, the style and manner on the other, have a mark, an accent, of high beauty, worth, and power. But if we are asked to define this mark and accent in the abstract, our answer must be: No, for we should thereby be darkening the question, not clearing it. The mark and accent are as given by the substance and matter of that poetry, by the style and manner of that poetry, and of all other poetry which is akin to it in quality.

Only one thing we may add as to the substance and matter of poetry, guiding ourselves by Aristotle's profound observation that the superiority of poetry over history consists in its possessing a higher truth and a higher seriousness. Let us add, therefore, to what we have said, this: that the substance and matter of the best poetry acquire their special character from possessing, in an eminent degree, truth and seriousness. We may add yet further what is in itself evident, that to the style and manner of the best poetry their special character, their accent, is given by their diction, and, even yet more, by their movement. And though we distinguish between the two characters, the two accents, of suyeriority, yet they are nevertheless vitally connected one with the other. The superior character of truth and seriousness, in the matter and substance of the best poetry, is inseparable from the superiority of diction and movement marking its style and manner.

The two superiorities are closely related, and are in steadfast proportion one to the other. So far as high poetic truth and seriousness are wanting to a poet's matter and substance, so far also, we may be sure, will a high poetic stamp of diction and movement be wanting to his style and manner. In proportion as this high stamp of diction and movement, again, is absent from a poet's style and manner, we shall find, also, that high poetic truth and seriousness are absent from his substance and matter.

So stated, these are but dry generalities ; their whole force lies in their application. And I could wish every student of poetry to make the application of them for himself. Made by himself, the application would impress itself upon his mind far more deeply than made by me. Neither will my limits allow me to make any full application of the generalities above propounded ; but in the hope of bringing out, at any rate, some significance in them, and of establishing an important principle more firmly by their means, I will, in the space which remains to me, follow rapidly from the commencement the course of our English poetry with them in my view.

Once more I return to the early poetry of France, with which our own poetry, in its origins, is indissolubly connected. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, that seed-time of all modern language and literature, the poetry of France had a clear predominance in Europe. Of the two divisions of that poetry, its productions in the *langue d' oil* and its productions in the *langue d'oc*, the poetry of the *langue d'oc*, of southern France, of the troubadours, is of importance because of its effect on Italian literature ;—the first literature of modern Europe to

strike the true and grand note, and to bring forth, as in Dante and Petrarch it brought forth, classics. But the predominance of French poetry in Europe, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is due to its poetry of the *langue d'oil*, the poetry of northern France and of the tongue which is now the French language. In the twelfth century the bloom of this romance-poetry was earlier and stronger in England, at the court of our Anglo-Norman kings, than in France itself. But it was a bloom of French poetry; and as our native poetry formed itself, it formed itself out of this. The romance-poems which took possession of the heart and imagination of Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are French; "they are," as Southey justly says, "the pride of French literature, nor have we anything which can be placed in competition with them." Themes were supplied from all quarters; but the romance-setting which was common to them all, and which gained the ear of Europe, was French. This constituted for the French poetry, literature, and language, at the height of the Middle Age, an unchallenged predominance. The Italian Brunetto Latini, the master of Dante, wrote his *Treasure* in French because, he says, "la parleure en est plus delitable et plus commune a toutes gens." In the same century, the thirteenth, the French romance-writer, Christian of Troyes, formulates the claims, in chivalry and letters, of France, his native country, as follows:—

> "Or vous ert par ce livre apris,
> Que Gresse ot de chevalerie
> Le premier los et de clergie;
> Puis vint chevalerie a Rome,
> Et de la clergie la some,
> Qui ore est en France venue.

Diex doinst qu'ele i soit retenue,
Et que li lius li abelisse
Tant que de France n'isse
L'onor qui s'i est arestee !"

"Now by this book you will learn that first Greece had the renown for chivalry and letters : then chivalry and the primacy in letters passed to Rome, and now it is come to France. God grant it may be kept there ; and that the place may please it so well, that the honour which has come to make stay in France may never depart thence !"

Yet it is now all gone, this French romance-poetry, of which the weight of substance and the power of style are not unfairly represented by this extract from Christian of Troyes. Only by means of the historic estimate can we persuade ourselves now to think that any of it is of poetical importance.

But in the fourteenth century there comes an Englishman nourished on this poetry, taught his trade by this poetry, getting words, rhyme, metre from this poetry ; for even of that stanza which the Italians used, and which Chaucer derived immediately from the Italians, the basis and suggestion was probably given in France. Chaucer (I have alread named him) fascinated his contemporaries, but so too did Christian of Troyes and Wolfram of Eschenbach. Chaucer's power of fascination, however, is enduring ; his poetical importance does not need the assistance of the historic estimate ; it is real. He is a genuine source of joy and strength, which is flowing still for us and will flow always. He will be read, as time goes on, far more generally than he is read now. His language is a cause of difficulty for us ; but so also and I think in quite as great a degree, is the language of Burns.

In Chaucer's case, as in that of Burns, it is a difficulty to be unhesitatingly accepted and overcome.

If we ask ourselves wherein consists the immense superiority of Chaucer's poetry over the romance-poetry—why it is that in passing from this to Chaucer we suddenly feel ourselves to be in another world, we shall find that his superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry. His superiority in substance is given by his large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life,—so unlike the total want, in the romance-poets, of all intelligent command of it. Chaucer has not their helplessness; he has gained the power to survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view. We have only to call to mind the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. The right comment upon it is Dryden's: "It is sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that *here is God's plenty*." And again: "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense." It is by a large, free, sound representation of things, that poetry, this high criticism of life, has truth of substance; and Chaucer's poetry has truth of substance.

Of his style and manner, if we think first of the romance-poetry and then of Chaucer's divine liquidness of diction, his divine fluidity of movement, it is difficult to speak temperately. They are irresistible, and justify all the rapture with which his successors speak of his "gold dew-drops of speech." Johnson misses the point entirely when he finds fault with Dryden for ascribing to Chaucer the first refinement of our numbers, and says that Gower also can show smooth numbers and easy rhymes. The refinement of our numbers means something far more than this. A nation may have versifiers with smooth numbers and easy rhymes, and yet may have no real poetry at all.

Chaucer is the father of our splendid English poetry; he is our "well of English undefiled," because by the lovel charm of his diction, the lovely charm of his movement, he makes an epoch and founds a tradition. In Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, we can follow the tradition of the liquid diction, the fluid movement, of Chaucer; at one time it is his liquid diction of which in these poets we feel the virtue, and at another time it is his fluid movement. And the virtue is irresistible.

Bounded as is my space, I must yet find room for an example of Chaucer's virtue, as I have given examples to show the virtue of the great classics. I feel disposed to say that a single line is enough to show the charm of Chaucer's verse; that merely one line like this—

"O martyr sounded[1] in virginitee!"

has a virtue of manner and movement such as we shall not find in all the verse of romance-poetry;—but this is saying nothing. The virtue is such as we shall not find, perhaps, in all English poetry, outside the poets whom I have named as the special inheritors of Chaucer's tradition. A single line, however, is too little if we have not the strain of Chaucer's verse well in our memory; let us take a stanza. It is from *The Prioress's Tale*, the story of the Christian child murdered in a Jewry—

"My throte is cut unto my nekke-bone
Saide this child, and as by way of kinde
I should have deyd, yea, longe time agone;
But Jesu Christ, as ye in bookes finde,
Will that his glory last and be in minde,
And for the worship of his mother dere
Yet may I sing *O Alma* loud and clere."

*The French *soude*: soldered, fixed fast.

Wordsworth has modernised this Tale, and to feel how delicate and evanescent is the charm of verse, we have only to read Wordsworth's first three lines of this stanza after Chaucer's—

> " My throat is cut unto the bone, I trow,
> Said this young child, and by the law of kind
> I should have died, yea, many hours ago."

The charm is departed. It is often said that the power of liquidness and fluidity in Chaucer's verse was dependant upon a free, a licentious dealing with language, such as is now impossible ; upon a liberty, such as Burns too enjoyed, of making words like *neck*, *bird*, into a dissyllable by adding to them, and words like *cause*, *rhyme*, into a dissyllable by sounding the *e* mute. It is true that Chaucer's fluidity is conjoined with this liberty, and is admirably served by it ; but we ought not to say that it was dependant upon it. It was dependant upon his talent. Other poets with a like liberty do not attain to the fluidity of Chaucer ; Burns himself does not attain to it. Poets, again, who have a talent akin to Chaucer's, such as Shakespeare or Keates, have known how to attain to his fluidity without the like liberty.

And yet Chaucer is not one of the great classics. His poetry transcends and effaces, easily and without effort, all the romance-poetry of Catholic Christendom ; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry contemporary with it ; it transcends and effaces all the English poetry subsequent to it down to the age of Elizabeth. Of such avail is poetic truth of substance, in its natural and necessary union with poetic truth of style. And yet, I say, Chaucer is not one of the great classics. He has not their accent. What is wanting to him is suggested by

the mere mention of the name of the first great classic of Christendom, the immortal poet who died eighty years before Chaucer,—Dante. The accent of such verse as is

" In la sua volontade e nostra pace . . ."

is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach ; we praise him, but we feel that this accent is out of the question for him. It may be said that it was necessarily out of the reach of any poet in the England of that stage of growth. Possibly ; but we are to adopt a real, not a historic, estimate of poetry. However we may account for its absence, something is wanting, then, to the poetry of Chaucer, which poetry must have before it can be placed in the glorious class of the best. And there is no doubt what that something is. It is the, the high and excellent seriousness, which Aristotle assigns as one of the grand virtues of poetry. The substance of Chaucer's poetry, his view of things and his criticism of life, has largeness, freedom, shrewdness, benignity ; but it has not this high seriousness. Homer's criticism of life has it Dante's has. it, Shakespeare's has it. It is this chiefly which gives to our spirits what they can rest upon ; and with the increasing demands of our modern ages upon poetry, this virtue of giving us what we can rest upon will be more and more highly esteemed. A voice from the slums of Paris, fifts or sixty years after Chaucer, the voice of poor Villon out of his life of riot and crime, has at its happy moments (as, for instance; in the last stanza of *La Belle Heaulmiere**)

* The name *Heaulmiere* is said to be derived from a headdress (helm) worn as a mark by courtesans. In Villon's ballad, a poor old creature of this class laments her days of youth and beauty. The last stanza of the ballad runs thus—

(*Continue on Page 106*)

more of this important poetic virtue of seriousness than all the productions of Chaucer. But its apparition in Villon, and in men like Villon, is fitful ; the greatness of the great poets, the power of their criticism o life, is that their virtue is sustained.

To our praise, therefore, of Chaucer as a poet there must be this limitation ; he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of substance, though he has no high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his truth of substauce he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.

For my pr sent purpose I need not dwell on our Elizapethan poetry, or on the continuation and close of

(*Continuw fsom p. No. 105*)

" Ainsi le bon temps regretons
Entre nous, pauvres vieilles sottes.
Assises bas, a croppetons,
Tout en ung tas comme pelottes ;
A petit feu de chenevottes
Tost allu nees, tost estainctes.
Et jadis fusmes si mignottes !
Ainsi en prend a maintz et maintes."

"Thus amongst ourselves we regret the good time, poor silly old things, low-seated on our heels, all in a heap like so many balls; by a little fire of hemp-stalks, soon lighted, soon spent. And once we were such darlings ! So fares it with many and many a one."

this poetry in Milton. We are all of us profess to be agreed in the estimate of this poetry : we all of us recognise it as great poetry, our greatest, and Shakespeare and Milton as our poetical classics. The real estimate, here, has universal currency. With the next age of our poetry divergency and difficulty begin. An historic estimate of that poetry has established itself ; and the question is, whether it will be found to coincide with the real estimate.

The age of Dryden, together with our whole eighteenth century which followed it, sincerely believed itself to have produced poetical classics of its own, and even to have made advance, in poetry, beyound all its predecessors. Dryden regards as not seriously disputable the opinion "that the sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers." Cowley could see nothing at all in Chaucer's poetry. Dryden heartily admired, and, as we have seen, praised its matter admirably ; but of its exquisite manner and movement all he can find to say is that "there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect." Addison, wishing to praise Chaucer's numbers, compares them with Dryden's own. And all through the eighteenth century, and down even into our own times, the stereotyped phrase of approbation for good verse found in our early poetry has been, that it even approached the verse of Dryden. Addison, Pope, and Johnson.

Are Dryden and Pope poetical classics ? Is the historic estimate, which represents them as such, and which has been so long established that it cannot easily give way, the real estimate ? Wordsworth and Coleridge, as is well known, denied it ; but the authority of Wordsworth and Coleridge does not weigh much with the young generation, and there-

are many signs to show that the eighteenth century and its judgments are coming into favour again. Are the favourite poets of the eighteenth century classics ?

It is impossible within my present limits to discuss the question fully. And what man of letters would not shrink from seeming to dispose dictatorially of the claims of two men who are, at any rate, such masters in letters as Dryden and Pope ; two men of such admirable talent, both of them, and one of them, Dryden, a man, on all sides, of such energetic and genial power ? And yet, if we are to gain the full benefit from poetry, we must have the real estimate of it. I cast about for some mode of arriving, in the present case, at such an estimate without offence, And perhaps the best way is to begin, as it is easy to begin, with cordial praise.

When we find Chapman, the Elizabethan translator of Homer, expressing himself in his preface thus : "Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora and Ganges few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm that, the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun,"—we pronounce that such a prose is intolerable. When we find Milton writing: "And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he, who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem,"—we pronounce that such a prose has its own grandeur, but that it is obsolete and inconvenient. But when we find Dryden telling us : "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years ; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be

misconstrued in all I write,"—then we exclaim that here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how. Yet Dryden was Milton's contemporary.

But after the Restoration the time had come when our nation felt the imperious need of a fit prose. So, too, the time had likewise come when our nation felt the impe ious need of freeing itself from the absorbing preoccupation which religion in the Puritan age had exercised. It was impossible that this freedom should be brought about without some negative excess, without some neglect and impairment of the religious life of the soul ; and the spiritual history of the eighteenth century shows us that the freedom was not achieved ; without them. Still, the freedom was achieved the preoccupation, an undoubtedly baneful and retarding one if it had continued, was got rid of. And as with religion amongst us at that period, so it was also with letters. A fit prose was a necessity ; but it was impossible that a fit prose should establish itself amongst us without some touch of frost to the imaginative life of the soul. The needful qualities for a fit prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. The men of letters, whose destiny it may be to bring their nation to the attainment of a fit prose, must of necessity, whether they work in prose or in verse, give a predominating, and almost exclusive attention to the qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. But an almost exclusive attention to these qualities involves some repression and silencing of poetry.

—

We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century. For the purposes of their mission and destiny

their poetry, like their prose, is admirable. Do you ask me whether Dryden's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good ?

> "A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchanged,
> Fed on the lawns and in the forest ranged."

I answer : Admirable for the purposes of the inaugurator of an age of prose and reason. Do you ask me whether Pope's verse, take it almost where you will, is not good ?

> "To Hounslow Heath I point, and Banstead Down ;
> Thence comes your mutton, and these chicks my own."

I answer : Admirable for the purposes of the high priest of an age of prose and reason. But do you ask me whether such verse proceeds from men with an adequate poetic criticism of life, from men whose criticism of life has a high seriousness, or even, without that high seriousness, has poetic largeness, freedom, insight, benignity ? Do you ask me whether the application of ideas to life in the verse of these men, often a powerful application, no doubt, is a powerful *poetic* application ? Do you ask me whether the poetry of these men has either the matter or the inseparable manner of such an adequate poetic criticism ; whether it has the accent of

> "Absent thee from felicity awhile . . ."

or of

> "And what is else not to be overcome . . ."

or of

> "O martyr souded in virginitee !"

I answer : It has not and cannot have them : it is the poetry of the builders of an age of prose and reason. Though they

may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose.

Gray is our poetical classic of that literature and age ; the position of Gray is singular, and demands a word of notice here. He has not the volume or the power of poets who, coming in times more favourable, have attained to an independent criticism of life. But he lived with the great poets, he lived, above all, with the Greeks, through perpetually studying and enjoying them ; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner. The point of view and the manner are not self-sprung in him, he caught them of others ; and he had not the free and abundant use of them. But whereas Addison and Pope never had the use of them, Gray had the use of them at times. He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic.

And now, after Gray, we are met, as we draw towards the end of the eighteenth century, we are met by the great name of Burns. We enter now on times where the personal estimate of poets begins to be rife, and where the real estimate of them is not reached without difficulty. But in spite of the disturbing pressures of personal partiality, of national partiality, let us try to reach a real estimate of the poetry of Burns.

By his English poetry Burns in general belongs to the eighteenth century, and has little importance for us.

"Mark ruffian Violence, distain'd with crimes,
Rousing elate in these degenerate times ;
View unsuspecting Innocence a prey,
As guileful Fraud points out the erring way ;

While subtle Litigation's pliant tongue
The life-blood equal sucks of Right and Wrong !"

Evidently this is not the real Burns, or his name and fame would have disappeared long ago. Nor is Clarinda's love-poet, Sylvander, the real Burns either. But he tells us himself: "These English songs gravel me to death. I have not the command of the language that I have of my native tongue. In fact, I think that my ideas are more barren in English than in Scotch. I have been at *Duncan Gray* to dress it in English, but all I can do is desperately stupid." We English turn naturally, in Burns, to the poems in our own language, because we can read them easily ; but in those poems we have not the real Burns.

The real Burns is of course in his Scotch poems. Let us boldly say that of much of this poetry, a poetry dealing perpetually with Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, a Scotchman's estimate is apt to be personal. A Scotchman is used to this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners ; he has a tenderness for it ; he meets its poet half way. In this tender mood he reads pieces like the *Holy Fair* or *Halloween*. But this world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners is against a poet, not for him, when it is not a partial countryman who reads him ; for in itself it is not a beautiful world, and no one can deny that it is of advantage to a poet to deal with a beautiful world. Burn's world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, and Scotch manners, is often a harsh, a sordid, a repulsive world ; even the world of his *Cottar's Saturday night* is not a beautiful world. No doubt a poet's criticism of life may have such truth and power that it triumphs over its world and delights us. Burns may triumph over this world, often he does triumph over his world, but let us

observe how and where. Burns is the first case we have had where the bias of the personal estimate tends to mislead ; Let us look at him closely—he can bear it.

Many of his admirers will tell us that we have Burns, convivial genuine, delightful here—

"Leeze me on drink ! it gies us mair
  Than either school or college ;
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
  It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
Be't whisky gill or penny wheep
  Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinking deep,
  To kittle up our notion
          By night or day."

There is a great deal of that sort of thing in Burns, and it is unsatisfactory, not becanse it is bacchanalian poetry, but because it has not that accent of sincerity which bacchanalian poetry, to do it justice, very often has. There is something in it of bravado, something which makes us feel that we have not the man speaking to us with his real voice ; something, therefore, poetically unsound.

With still more confidence, will his admirers tell us that we have the genuine Burns, the great poet, when his strain asserts the independence, equality, dignity, of men, as in the famous song *For a' that and a' that*—

"A prince can mak' a belted knight,
  A marquis, duke, and a' that ;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
  Guid faith he mauna fa' that !
For a' that, and a' that,
  Their dignities, and a' that,

The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
  Are higher rank than a' that."

Here they find his grand, genuine touches; and still more, when this puissant genius, who so often set morality at defiance, falls moralising—

"The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love
  Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
  Tho' naething should divulge it:
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
  The hazard o' concealing,
But och! it hardens a' within,
  And petrifies the feeling."

Or in a higher strain—

"Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
  Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone;
  Each spring, its various bias.
Then at the balance let's be mute,
  We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
  But know not what's resisted."

Or in a better strain yet, a strain, his admirers will say, unsurpassable—

"To make a happy fire-side clime
    To weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
    Of human life."

There is criticism of life for you, the admirers of Burns will say to us: there is the application of ideas to life!

There is, undoubtedly. The doctrine of the lastquoted lines coincides almost exactly with what was the aim and end, Xenophon tells us, of all the teaching of Socrates. And the application is a powerful one ; made by a man of vigorous understanding, and (need I say ?) a master of language.

But for supreme poetical success more is required than the powerful application of ideas to life ; it must be an application under the conditions fixed by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. Those laws fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness ;—the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity. The accent of high seriousness, born of absolute sincerity, is what gives to such verse as

"In la sua volontade e nostra pace . . ."

to such criticism of life as Dante's, its power. Is this accent felt in the passages which I have been quoting from Burns ? Surely not ; surely, if our sense is quick, we must perceive that we have not in those passages a voice from the very inmost soul of the genuine Burns ; he is not speaking to us from these depths, he is more or less preaching. And the compensation for admiring such passages less, from missing the perfect poetic accent in them, will be that we shall admire more the poetry where that accent is found.

No ; Burns, like Chaucer, comes short of the high seriousness of the great classics, and the virtue of matter and manner which goes with that high seriousness is wanting to his work. At moments he touches it in a profound and passionate melancholy, as in those four immortal lines taken by Byron as a motto for *The Bride of Abydos*, but which

have in them a depth of poetic quality such as resides no verse of Byron's own—

"Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

But a whole poem of that quality Burns cannot make; the rest, in the *Farewell to Nancy*, is verbiage.

We arrive best at the real estimate of Burns, I think, by conceiving his work as having truth of matter and truth of manner, but not the accent or the poetic virtue of the highest masters. His genuine criticism of life, when the sheer poet in him speaks, is ironic; it is not—

"Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here firm I rest, they must be best
Because they are Thy will!"

It is far rather: *Whistle owre the lave o't!* Yet we may say of him as of Chaucer, that of life and the world, as they come before him, his view is large, free, shrewd, benignant,—truly poetic, therefore; and his manner of rendering what he sees is to match. But we must note, at the same time, his great difference from Chaucer. The freedom of Chaucer is heightened, in Burns, by a fiery, reckless enegy; the benignity of Chaucer deepens, in Burns, into an overwhelming sense of the pathos of things;—of the pathos of human nature, the pathos, also, of nonhuman nature. Instead of the fluidity of Chaucer's manner, the manner of Burns has spring, bounding swiftness. Burns is by far the greater force, though he has perhaps less charm. The world of Chaucer is fairer, richer, more significant than

that of Burns; but when the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep, as in *Tam o' Shanter*, or still more in that puissant and splendid production, *The Jolly Beggars*, his world may be what it will, his poetic genius triumphs over it. In the world of *The Jolly Beggars* there is more than hideousness and squalor, there is bestiality; yet the piece is a superb poetic success. It has a breadth, truth, and power which make the famous scene in Auerbach's Cellar, of Goethe's *Faust*, seem artificial and tame besides it, and which are only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes

Here, where his largeness and freedom serve him so admirably, and also in those poems and songs where to shrewdness he adds infinite archness and wit, and to benignity infinite pathos, where his manner is flawless, and a perfect poetic whole is the result,—in things like the address to the mouse whose home he had ruined, in things like *Duncan Gray*, *Tam Glen*, *Whistle and I'll come to you my Lad*, *Auld Lang Syne* (this list might be made much longer) —here we have the genuine Burns, of whom the real estimate must be high indeed. Not a classic, nor with the excellent of the great classics, nor with a verse rising to a criticism of life and a virtue like theirs; but a poet with thorough truth of substance and an answering truth of style, giving us a poetry sound to the core. We all of us have a leaning towards the pathetic, and may be inclined perhaps to prize Burns most for his touches of piercing, sometimes almost intolerable, pathos; for verse like—

> We twa hae paidl't i' the burn
> From mornin' sun till dine;
> But seas between us braid hae roar'd
> Sin auld lang syne . . ."

where he is as lovely as he is sound. But perhaps it is by the perfection of soundness of his lighter and archer masterpieces that he is poetically most wholesome for us. For the votary misled by a personal estimate of Shelley, as so many of us have been, are, and will be,—of that beautiful spirit building his many-coloured haze of words and images

"Pinnacled dim in the intense inane"—

no contact can be wholesomer than the contact with Burns at his archest and soundest. Side by side with the

"On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire,
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire . . ."

of *Prometheus Unbound*, how salutary, how very salutary, to place this from *Tam Glen*—

"My minnie does constantly deave me
And bids me beware o' young men ;
They flatter, she says, to deceive me ;
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen ?"

But we enter on burning ground as we approach the poetry of times so near to us—poetry like that of Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth—of which the estimates are so often not only personal, but personal with passion. For my purpose, it is enough to have taken the single case of Burns, the first poet we come to of whose work the estimate formed is evidently apt to be personal, and to have suggested how we may proceed, using the poetry of the great classics as a sort of touchstone, to correct this estimate, as we had previously corrected by the same means the historic estimate where we met with it. A collection like the present, with its

succession of celebrated names and celebrated poems, offers a good opportunity to us for resolutely endeavouring to make our estimates of poetry real. I have sought to point out a method which will help us in making them so, and to exhibit it in use so far as to put any one who likes in a way of applying it for himself.

At any rate the end to which the method snd the estimate are designed to lead, and from leading to which, if they do lead to it, they get their whole value,—the benefit of being able clearly to feel and deeply to enjoy the best, the truly classic, in poetry,—is an end, let me say it once more at parting, of supreme importance. We are often told that an era is opening in which we are to see multitudes of a common sort of readers, and masses of a common sort of literature ; that such readers do not want and could not relish anything better than such literature, and that to provide it is becoming a vast and profitable, industry. Even if good literature entirely lost currency with the world, it would still be abundantly worth while to continue to enjoy it by oneself. But it never will lose currency with the world in spite of momentary appearances ; it never will lose supremacy. Currency and supremacy are insured to it, not indeed by the world's deliberate and conscious choice, but by something far deeper,—by the instinct of selfpreservation in humanity.

THE STUDY OF POETRY

Critical Analysis and Exposition

Use and Function of Poetry

Poetry has a great future. Mankind will find more and more sustenance in poetry. The idea is all that matters in poetry, and the idea has a life eternal. The *fact* is unstable; for example, the fact—the crucifixion of Christ—upon which Christianity is based, is now failing it, being challenged by the critical spirit of the age.

We should think of poetry as having a higher use than occasional diversion. Its function is to interpret life for us. Science is incomplete without poetry. Wordsworth rightly calls poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science—the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge". Science is a matter of the intellect, and, therefore, appeals to the limited man. Poetry is a matter of emotions and imagination, and, therefore, appeals to the whole man.

Compare Wordsworth's poem, *Up ! Up ! My Friend* :

Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things :
We murder to dissect.

Elsewhere Wordsworth speaks of a scientist as :

A fingering slave,
One that would peep and botanise
Upon his mother's grave.

Poetry can humanize science; so poetry is the breath and finer spirit of knowledge.

Definition of Poetry

Poetry is a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and beauty.

We have to consider several elements in this definition. The term—criticism of life—is a little misleading. Does not Arnold seem to emphasize the substance or matter of poetry above the form or matter ? But form and matter are one in poetry.

Worsfold on "Criticism of life"—"The poet or novelist by creating ideal pictures of life, provides an ideal standard with which the facts of real life can be contrasted." Arnold means by it application of ideas to life. There is some vagueness about this too. It is with experience of life that a poet or any artist has to deal, and this experience is transformed by the imagination. These ideas have some bearing upon life. But are they necessarily to be acted upon in life ? They may react upon life, but the ideas put into poetry, or with which poetry deals, do not necessarily shape our life. Perhaps it will be a little better to say that poetry interprets—and so does fiction too.

We have next to consider what poetic truth is and what poetic beauty is. Poetic truth evidently refers to the matter or substance of poetry *i. e.*, the experience of life as apprehended by the poet and as expressed poetically. Poetic beauty evidently refers to the form or manner of poetry. We have said above that form and matter are all one in poetry. So the truth of life, put into poetry, can be poetic truth when it is rendered by the imagination and becomes a thing of beauty which is a joy for ever. We may quote here Keats :

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Finally truth and beauty are identical.

There is further aspect of poetic truth. In poetry the truth is the mental reflection of the external reality. The poet reproduces in his representation of the real, not crude

realities but the mental aspects of the realities. As Lamborn puts it, "Art has nothing to do with absolute truth ; it shows truth coloured by the artist's mood, seen through the medium of the artist's mind."

Three Estimates of Poetry

The historic estimate regards a poet in relation to his age, or as concerned with a particular phase of development. The personal estimate has to do with the personal likes and dislikes of a critic in judging a poet. The real estimate looks for real excellences in poetry ; and is concerned with the sense for the best. It is satisfied with nothing short of perfection.

The historic estimate is likely to be applied in dealing with the poets of the past ; the personal estimate, in dealing with poets, contemporary, or modern.

Comparing the Old English poet, Caedmon, with Milton, is an instance of the historic estimate. And we may say that Arnold's disparagement of Shelley is an instance of the personal estimate.

Arnold discourages either the historic or the literary estimate. The historic estimate may be necessary in studying a poet of the past and the influence he exercised upon his contemporaries or in reference to the future development of poetry. For example, in tracing the history of romantic poetry we examine some poets of the late eighteenth century—Thompson, Collins, Gray. A poet is not to be judged independently of his age. Arnold himself explains the sterility of Gray with reference to the age in which he was born ; this is a historic estimate. He could have noted too that Gray anticipated the romantic movement in poetry.

Pope was not a great poet, but he was a great poet in his age, and that because he perfected the heroic couplet as a medium of verse. He was decried in the age of Wordsworth because the standard of judgment varies from age to age. Arnold's real estimate comes to something like an absolute standard of judgement. Nor can we totally ignore the personal estimate.

After all a poet is what he means to an individual reader or critic. The personal reaction of a reader or critic—and that of course depends partly on the individual temperament—is set forth in literary criticism. The personal estimate is in fact the main factor, determining the general trend of any critic's judgment. There has been no exception in the case of Arnold. Arnold has a classically trained mind and a cool temperament, and is naturally biased toward Greek sanity and temperance, which determine his literary judgments. He may sincerely endeavour to discover the real excellences of a poet, but in doing so he follows his own bias—his classical turn of mind. No absolute standard can be set up for literary judgment.

Arnold writes with a very practical end in view. And he tells us how to apply the real estimate. He suggests that we must treasure up in our memory lines and expressions of the great masters—and he gives us examples from poets, English and classsical. These lines and passages are to be applied as a test. These lines sound all right—they have the quality of strangeness added to beauty, noted for the startling novelty or familiarity of ideas as well as the felicity of expression. These lines are picked out of the mass of a poet's work. Does a poet maintain the same level in all that he writes ? Even Shakespeare has his lapses ; the level of excellence is not uniformly maintained in the work of any poet. And we are asked by Arnold to judge the work of other poets by the best lines of the best poets. Arnold however, sums up thus : "The higher qualities of poetry reside in the matter and substance as well as in the manner and style ; the substance of poetry must possess truth and seriousness, and upon truth and seriousness depends the excellence of the style and diction."

Chaucer and his Influence

Chaucer was nourished on early French poetry, and borrowed his rhyme and meter from it, *e. g* , the heroic couplet ; the ottava rima *(a b a b a b c c)*. though of Italian origin, came to Chaucer through French poetry. Chaucer's poetry has more life in it than the French romance poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Chaucer's superiority lies in :—

(1) His large, tolerant and gracious view of life. (Chaucer deals with life, and the French romance-poets deal with shadowy abstractions.)

(2) His verse-melody ("divine liquidness of diction, divine fluidity of movement")—easy flow and smoothness of verification.

(3) His tradition of melodious verse continued in Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats.

Yet Chaucer is not a great classic. He lacks high seriousness, as compared with Homes, Dante, and Shakespeare.

Age of Dryden and Pope

It is an age of prose and reason. Dryden and Pope are not poetical classics. Tney and their age thought a lot about their poetical production. Wordsworth and Coleridge who began a reform of English poetry, first challenged their claims. In the eighteenth century real poetry declined and as a matter of fact sensible prose—prose for every day use—came into existence. There was a demand for such a prose. We may note the following factors :—

(1) Change from a poetical to a critical temper ; (2) spread of the spirit of common sense ; (3) growth of science requiring precision and lucidity ; (4) political purposes to which prose was applied in an age of political controversy ; (5) rise of a varied and miscellaneous public ; (6) despecialization and generalization of knowledge ; (7) pamphlets and journals ; and (8) influence of France holding the model of prose required.

The development of a fit prose was attended by "some touch of forest to the imaginative life of the soul." The qualities for such a prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. Exclusive attention to these qualities is fatal to poetry. The poetry of Dryden and Pope, judged by the standard of prose, is admirable. But in it we look in vain for an adequate poetic criticism of life, or high

seriousness, even anything of Chaucer's tolerance, insight and graciousness.

Gray : Arnold regards Gray as a poetical classic in the eighteenth century literature. He studied and assimilated the spirit of the Greeks, and caught their poetic manner. He cannot be said to be an original poet. He is rather full of echoes. Arnold thinks that if he had not been born in that unpoetical age, he could have attained to an independant criticism of life. The age evidently repressed his "noble rage" and froze "the genial current" of his soul. Hence the scantiness of his production. Yet Arnold stoutly maintains that Gray is classic. It is an instance of Arnold's personal estimate, Gray is important because he is one of the pioneers of the Romantic Movement in English poetry—but he has hardly been able to outgrow the manner of the eighteenth century poetry.

Burns : Arnold attempts a real estimate of Burns. The countrymen of Burns are apt to fall into a personal estimate of the poet. Burns is not to be judged by his English verses, in which he is not quite at home, and which hardly differ from the eighteenth century poetry with its insipid poetical epithets, its frigid emotions and conventional style. The real Burns is in his Scotch poems. Arnold blames him for living in a world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion, Scotch manner. Evidently Arnold is unable to appreciate the realistic note in Burns, but he admires his truth and passionate sincerity.

The best of Burns is not in his wild drink songs, nor in his declamatory verse, expressive of the new democratic sentiment nor in his didactic songs, though there admirers of variety. Here Arnold shows the danger of the personal estimate in the case of Burns. There is a powerful application of ideas of life—the note of passionate sincerity—in Burns' poetry, but Burns has, as Arnold maintains, often been indifferent to the laws of poetic truth. Burns lacks high seriousness, which is born of absolute sincerity. High seriousness, as Arnold seems to think, is a voice from the inmost soul of the poet. It is allied to absolute sincerity,

which can reveal the inmost soul of the poet, as in a flash. The lines from Burns, that are quoted by Arnold—lines said to be marked by high seriousness—are noted for concentration of thought and expression—packing of sense, profoundly passionate, soul-stirring, into a minimum of word.

Arnold, however, finds the note of high seriousness in lines :

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

But it is not continuous or sustained. On the whole Burns has the truth of matter and the truth of manner, but not the accent of the master. He has an ironical sense of life and things, often crossed and lightened by tenderest pathos—often approaching Virgil's *lacrymae rerum* (sense of tears in things mortal).

Arnold compares Burns with Chaucer. Like Chaucer's, his view is large, free, shrewd, benignant—truly poetic : but Chaucer's freedom is replaced by a fiery energy in Burns, and Chaucer's benignant grace, by a deep sense of pathos, and Chaucer's fluent melody, by more impassioned rhythm and quicker movement. Chaucer portrays a fairer and more gracious world, but Burns can but seldom escape from the world of Scotch drink, Scotch religion and Scotch manner—though as Arnold confesses, he can reveal truth and beauty in such a world. But the comparison seems to be rather unfair, for Chaucer is pre-eminently a narrative poet, and Burns, pre-eminently a lyric poet.

NOTES

Paragraph. 1. **The future of poetry.......stay**—*i.e.*, mankind will turn more and more to poetry in the future for consolation and sustenance of the spirit rather than depend on religion, for creeds and dogmas are constantly changing ; it is good poetry that will minister to our mind

and spirit. **There is not a creed........dissolve**—the old faith and tradition are being disrupted by the advance of science. The Bible was subjected to criticism in those days; belief in the Trinity began to be discarded, and the miracles, attributed to Christ, began to be questioned. **Our religion ....fact** —*i e.*, Christianity is based upon such facts as the crucifixion, the miracles and formulated creeds and dogmas—and those are being questioned now in the age of science and advance in knowledge. **But for poetry........ illusion**—Poetry does not depend on fact, but on idea. Facts may change, and be replaced by new things, discovered in human experience. Poetry deals with ideas—ideas about all that is primary and elemental in human experience —with "truths that wake to perish never." The 'world of illusion' is the world created by the poet's imagination. Compare :

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name. —*Shakespeare.*

The strongest..........poetry—It is the poetical elements in the religion that have the strongest appeal to the human mind and imagination.

Paragraph 2. **One great contributory stream**—English poetry. **We should conceive.........hitherto**—we read poetry for momentary diversion, and do not feel that it can have an important bearing upon our life. **More and more mankind.............. sustain us**—It is Arnold's personal view. Poetry interests but few people. It serves the purpose of occasional diversion. It is Arnold's illusion that people will take more and more to poetry, and rely less on philosophy and religion. **Our science.. ....incomplete**—*i e.*, poetry can humanize science. **The impassioned....science**—

science is soulless unless it is allied to poetry. **The breath ....knowledge**—the quintessence of knowledge. **Our religion............knowledge**—Christianity basing itself on such facts as the crucifixion and the world's acceptance of the teaching of Christ and philosophy, dealing with the finite and the infinite. with cause and effect, give us the shadows, not the realities of knowledge.

Paragraph 3. **Sainte Beuve**—(1808-1869), French critic. **Charlatan**—one who boasts of his pretended powers. **In Poetry.........one**—thought and the art of expression blend together in poetry, and one cannot be separated from the other. The inevitable union of thought and expression is the test of good poetry. **Charlatanism is for......half-true**—charlatanism may be taken as *bravura i.e.*, brilliant or dashing display in performance, and it does not make excellent poetry. **A criticism of life.....,poetic beauty**—the function of poetry, as Arnold thinks, is the criticism of life. What can that mean ? Is it to make the best that has been thought and known prevail ? It seems to be so. After all poetry is to deal with human experience which is the *matter* for poetry, and to put it into arresting words and phrases, which is the *manner* for poetry. Arnold states that the criticism of life is the application of ideas to life, which does not carry it much further, however. It has been explained also to the result of the poet's generalization upon life ; the beautiful things he says about life and the beautiful pictures he draws about life as he passes through life are the criticism of life ; the value of poetry lies in the beauty and truth of this generalization ; and it is saying no more than

Beauty is truth ; truth beauty.

Paragraph 4. **A poetical collection..............present**—*The English poets*, edited by T. H. Ward. **We should therefore steadily set........proceed**—a high standard of excellence should be kept before the mind by the reader, and never for a moment lost sight of, if he is to get the real benefit—the sustenance of his spirit and all that from poetry. The reader of poetry should be, in a sense, a critic, and find out

what best poetry there is for him to read. Arnold is going to talk of the real estimate.

Paragraph 5. **This real estimate**—a sense for the best, the really excellent in poetry and the sense of strength and joy to be drawn from poetry. **The course of development... overrate it**—the historic estimate becomes necessary to determine the place of a poet in relation to other poets, contemporary, past, and also future. A student of literature cannot ignore the historical estimate. For example, to find out what part Wordsworth played in the Romantic Movement, we have recourse to the historic estimate. But the estimate is not enough by itself. Nor can Arnold's real estimate be enough if it ignores the historic estimate or the personal estimate. **Our personal affinities.........high importance**—the personal element cannot be totally excluded. The final judgments of a critic depend on his personal relation. He reads a poem, and it produces some effect upon him ; different individuals may be differently affected by the same poem, though they may find something in common and something on which they all agree. Poetry appeals to the common humanity in us and this is how we discover the excellence of poetry. But after all it is a personal estimate for every individual reader of poetry. A French critic says, "The whole effort of a sincere man is to erect his personal impressions into laws." This is at any rate the function of a critic. And Arnold has been doing the same.

Paragraph 6. **It is evident how naturally......poetry**—Here Arnold recognizes the value of the historic estimate in the study of poetry. We find Shakespeare the greatest poet and dramatist by comparing him with poets and dramatists who lived in the past and also by comparing him with poets and dramatists who had come after him—and this is a historic estimate. **Their own early poetry**—*i.e.*, Renaissance medieval poetry. **The Court-tragedy of the seventeenth century**—the works of Corneille and Racine who adopted the formal rules of Aristotle's *Poetics* ; the sipirit of the ancients evaporated ; only the skeleton remained. **Pellisson**—(1624-1693), a member of the French Academy.

Politesse sterile et rampante—barren and extravagant refinement. **Clement Marot**—(1496-1544), a French poet. **The cloud of glory...... history** —*i. e.*, a blind admiration for the classical writing—the art and literature of the Greeks—may arrest the natural deveploment of the literature of a country, and prevents the historical perspective. **One single point**—the greatest writer of an epoch. **It substitutes... physiognomy** we miss the living person (the great artist who should be so near to all his fellow-creatures), and see instead a luminous light. **It does not......model**—so Arnold is imposing upon us a model—the Greek model of thought and culture—and he seems to be carried away by his admiration for all that is Greek. **Above all, for the historian.... unacceptable**—what Arnold quotes here is a vigorous defence of the historic estimate and goes againsthis imposition of the Greek model.

Paragraph 7. **Classic character**—the Greek virtue of sanity and temperance, which Arnold so highly recommends, or as he explains below, *classic* means the very best, the most exellent. To **Trace the labour....its end** - As Arnold points out here, a research student may pursue the historic estimate, going into all the details about the poet and the circumstances, of his life, and the relation in which he stood to his contemporaries. But Arnold doubts whether it makes for the real enjoyment and appreciation of good poetry. **Literary dilettantism**—mere dabbling in letters. **Methuselah**—the oldest man, mentioned in the Bible, he died at the age of 969. **Had all of us .....steadfastness**—*i.e.*, if our understanding and will were not affected by old age.

Paragraph 8. **A compilation like the present**—T. H. Ward's. *The English Poets*. **Imitation**—*The Imitation of Christ*, a famous devotional work, written originally in Latin (1417-1421), and attributed to Thomas a 'Kempis. **Cum multa legeris ....principium**—however much you have learnt and known, you are bound to return always to the one principle.

Paragraph 9. **Of very much gravity**—of a very serious consequence. **Impose even.........them**—deceive or mislead the men of letters who pursue the historic estimate. **Caedmon**—the cowherd of Whitby, the greatest p et of the Anglo-Saxons He lived in the latter half of the 7th century, and, according to Bede he was an ignorant man and knew nothing of poetry until one night, when sleeping in the byre, he was miraculously commanded by an angel to sing the Creation and the beginning of created things. In his metrical paraphrase of *Genesis* we find the germ of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. **Joculator or jongleur**—an itinerant minstrel. **Chanson de Roland**——The *Song of Roland*, attributed to the Norman Trouvere Theroulde or Turo dus, tells the story of the death of Roland and all the paladins at Roncesvalles and of Charlemagne's vengeance. **Tailefer**—the Norman minstrel who sang to encourage William's soldiers at the battle of Hasting (1066). Compare:

Taillefer, the minstrel-knight, bestrode
A gallant steed, and swiftly rode
Before the Duke, and sang the song
Of charlemagne, of Roland strong,
Of Oliver, and those beside
Brave Knights at Roncevaun that died.

Monument of epic genious—a first-rate epic poem. **Artificial ......ages**—the material for an epic was supplied by primitive ages when the tribal stages had been replaced by a more or less settled life, in which condition Homer's *Iliad* was written. Milton's *Paradise Lort* is a literary or artificial epic. We are **here............poetry altogether**—Arnold quotes a passage from *chanson de Roland* and another from the *Iliad*. We do not see much of a difference in quality between the two passages. The pathos poignant in each case and the simplicity in which it is expressed, are equally effective.

Paragraph. 10. **An infallible touchstone.........beside them**—memorable lines and passages of the best poetry will serve as a test for detecting excellences in other poetry that we read. This is, according to Arnold, how to apply the real estimate.

Paragraph. 11. **If we are thoroughly penetrated.......... wanting there** – some people are insensible to poetry, and it will be no use if they are confronted with the specimens, given here by Arnold. Those who have a capacity for enjoying and appreciating poetry, will certainly feel the beauty of these specimens—beauty of sentiment and beauty of expression. If critics draw out in the abstract all that constitutes excellences of poetry, what is the harm ? A reader, following the critic, may discover too good poetry, and he will have to go to concrete examples or specimens for the purpose. **They are in the.........style—** The excellence of poetry lies in excellence of thought and in beauty of expression. It is a combination of poetic truth and poetic beauty. **No, for we should.........it**—good poetry is a matter of feeling ; it cannot be defined in words.

Paragraph 12. **A higher truth and a higher seriousness** —The higher truth may mean here a synthesis of human experience which the poet seeks to express in words : the higher seriousness comes from his thorough apprehension of the truth of life which he conveys to the reader. The Greek words quoted mean 'more philosophical and of graver import. We may quote Aristotle here, and then the idea will be clearer : "The work of Herodotus might be put into verse and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates, what has happened, the other what may happen. *Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and higher thing than history ; for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.* By the universal, I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act according to the law of probability or necessity ; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is—for example—what Alcibiades did or suffered." **The superior character........style and manner**— The close union of thought and expression is emphasized again and again. Truth and seriousness go into the matter of poetry ; in proportion to the truth and seriousness are the excellence and beauty of style.

Paragraph. 14. **Langue d'oil and langue d'oc**—*Langue d'oil*, also called Old French was a French dialect of the Middle Ages, spoken in the provinces of France, north of the Loire River, and from which modern French is derived : literally "language of oil, so called because in those provinces the word for "yes" was *oil* ; *Langue d'oc*—a French dialect of the Middle Ages, spoken in the southern provinces of France ; literally "language of oc", so called because in these provinces the word for 'yes' was oc. The poets of northern France were trouveres—narrative and romance poets. The poets of southern France were troubadours—lyric poets. **Is of importance............ literature**—Troubadour poetry or the lyric poetry of southern France had a great influence upon Dante and Petrarch. But the poetry of northern France—narrative and epic poetry—had a great influence in the rest of Europe, including England. **Brunetto Latini**—(1210—1294), Italian scholar and orator. **La parleure........... gens**—that tongue is more delightful and common to all men. **Christian of Troyes**—a French poet about whose life little more is known than that he lived about 1175. He worked up the Arthurian legends into numerous spirited and refined poems, which had a wide literary influence.

Paragraph 16. **An Englishman. ....poetry**—*i.e.*, Chaucer (1340-1400), who assimilated the romance poetry of northern France. **That stanza which the Italians used**—*i.e.*, Ottava rima—a stanza composed of 8 lines, each line has 11 syllables in Italian or 10 syllables in English, the first 6 lines rhyming alternately, and the last two with each other—*ab ab ab cc*. **Wolfram of Eschenbach**—a German poet (who died after 1215). He lived some time in the Wartburg near Eisenach. His epic, *Parcival*, is one of the most notable poems of the Middle Ages. **Chaucer's power............real**—the romance (or Trouvere) poetry of northern France is important historically. Chaucer owed much to this poetry but his poetry is great in itself. The real estimate establishes the greatness of his poetry. Arnold says the Chaucer fascinates, which means that his melody of verse, added to substance of poetry, attracts

the reader. **He is a genuine source......always**—Arnold tells us above that we shall turn more and more to poetry for joy and strength. Chaucer's poetry can give us joy and strength. **His language.........for us**—Chaucer wrote in the East-Midland dialect, which later became the standard language of England. It was still in the formative stage with many inflectional forms that later dropped off and with a large infusion of French words. So Chaucer's language is rather unfamiliar to a reader of to-day.

Paragraph 17. **His superiority.............all intelligence command of it**—Chaucer's poetry is superior to the romance poetry of France. This superiority resides in the substance and style of his poetry. Chaucer has a broader and more generous outlook on life—and deals with living men and women, but the romance poets of France deal with abstractions. and show but limited acquaintance with life. **He has gained.........view**—the human note and realism of Chaucer contrast with the vague abstraction and sentiment and the shadowy heroic figures which are presented by the trouveres or romance poets of France. **Here is God's plenty**—refers to the variety, and multiplicity of characters introduced in the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*, as we find in God's creation. The whole of medieval society is presented in the *Prologue*. **He is......... fountain of good sense**—refers to Chaucer's humour and balanced temperament. **It is by a large, free......truth of substance**—Chaucer deals in a large-hearted manner with things and life. His humour, his detachment, his sense of humanity all enter into his representation of life. So his poetry has the truth of substance. Here we meet no airy abstractions of the romance poets of France. Chaucer comes into close grips with life.

Paragraph 18. **Divine liquidness...........movement**—it means the smoothness of his versification, the melody of sound, the natural ease and spontaneity. **'Gold dew-drops of speech'**—quoted from Lydgate :

> The noble rhethor poet of Britain,
> That worthy was the laurel to have

Of poetrye, and the palm attain ;
That made first to distil and rain
The gold dew-drops of speech and eloquence
Into our tongue through his excellence,
And found the flowers first of rhetoric
Our rude speech only to enlumine.

Numbers—verse. **Gower**—(1325-1408), English poet. He was a friend of Chaucer, who gives him the title of "the moral Gower", which has clung to him ever since, '**Well** of English undefiled'—from Spenser.

Dan Chaucer, well of English undefyled,
On Fames eternal bead-roll worthie to be fyled.

Liquid diction—sweet, melodious verse. **Fluid movement**—easy and spontaneous flow.

Paragraph 19. **By way of kinde**—by the law of nature. **O Alma**—the first words of a hymn, addressed to the Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus Christ. **It is true......served by it**—Chaucer had greater resources in the language he used than a modern English poet, and the exquisite melody of his verse might be partly due to his use of these resources, for example, the sounding of the final *e* and the lengthening out of a syllable or so.

Paragraph 20. **His poetry.............age of Elizabeth**—Chaucer is easily superior to the romance poets of France and to his contemporaries, and he is not matched until we reach the Elizabethan age. **In la sua........pace**—in his will is our peace. There is not much in the thought of this line ; the majestic sound of the line that seems to attract Arnold. This cannot be the reason of Dante's superiority to Chaucer. Dante is a poet of a much greater range and scope, gifted with a higher imagination—"the vision and the faculty divine" and then the instrument he used—the Italian language—was more perfect than the English of Chaucer. His *Divina Commedia* is "an encyclopaedic view of the highest culture and knowledge of the age on philosophy, history, classical literature, physical science, morals,

theology, expressed in the sublimest and most exquisite poetry, and with consummate power and beauty of language." **High and excellent seriousness**—this is substituted for the Greek word—*spoudaisotes* ; it corresponds to Dante's *gravitas sententiae*. The word is used in connection with the distinction between poetry and history—"Poetry is a more philosophical and a *higher* thing than history." Arnold takes the word to mean *seriousness*. By high seriousness Arnold means the grand style, which, he says, arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetrically endowed, treats with simplicity or severity a serions subject. **Gives........rest upon**—*i.e.*, gives proper sustenance to our spirits. **Villon**—Francois Villon (1431—1435), French poet, famous for his ballads, among which may be mentioned, *The Ballad of the Hanged* and *The Ballad of Dead Ladies*.

Paragraph 23. **Dryden regards........our fathers**—Dryden claims that the highest development of English poetry took place in his own days. Verse in heroic couplet popularized by Pope, was much written in that age, and Dryden considers this to be the sweetest verse, ever written. **Cowley**—Abraham Cowley (1618—1657), English poet and prose writer. His best known poem is *The Davideis*. **"There is the rude sweetness.......perfect"**—The artificial elegancies of the eighteenth century poetry pleased Dryden's taste better, and he could not admire the spontaneous melody and sweetness of verse in Chaucer. **Addison**—Joseph Addison (1672—1719), English essayist, famous for his contributions to the *Tatlar and Spectator*. **And all through ......Johnson**—The eighteenth century was an age of prose and reason, and its poetry was but prose, direct and unambiguous put into the heroic couplet, and marked by brilliant phrases and conventional epithets. This kind of poetry was very much admired in the eighteenth century and even later until its claim to superiority was demolished by Wordsworth in his criticism. Pope in fact invented an artificial diction for poetry, in which feeling or emotion was held in abeyance ; the poetic diction of Pope was farthest removed from the pure and simple spirit of the great classics.

Paragraph 25. **Two men of such admirable talent...... genial power**—"Dryden does not belong to the highest rank among poets ; he cannot take his rank with Milton, or Spenser, or Dante. But he stands easily first in the second rank. His special power among English poets is that of arguing in verse. He is "unequalled as a reasoner in rhyme." Pope was more 'correct', and polished in couplets with more care ; but he has not the irresistible sweep of Dryden ; he has not his

"Full, resounding line,
The long majestic march and energy divine.

Paragraph 26. **Chapman**—George Chapman (1559—1634), English dramatist of the Elizabethan era. He is celebrated as a translator of Homer. **Gades**—Cadiz, city and seaport of Spain. **Aurora**—the dawn-goddess ; so it is the region of the dawn—the East. **From Gades to Aurora**—from extreme West to extreme East. **This Morning of our poet**—The morning of truth has dawned in Homer. **'And long it was not after...poem'**—from, 'Apology Smectymnuus **In my declining years**—Dryden was 66 when he translated **Virgil**

Paragraph 27. **Restoration**—the restoration of Charles II in 1660. **But after the Restoration......prose**—Prose was the demand of the age because (1) there was a change from a practical to a critical temper ; (2) spread of the spirit of common sense ; (3) growth of science requiring precision and lucidity ; (4) practical purposes to which prose came to be more and more applied in an age of increasing political controversy ; (5) rise of a varied and miscellaneous public ; (6) desire of despecialization and generalization of knowledge ; (7) pamphlets and journals ; (8) influence of France holding the model of prose required. **Preoccupation........ exercised**—The Puritan age was the age of Milton. Milton was a poet of militant Puritanism, and religion was one of the issues, with which the people of England were very much concerned in the days of Milton. Milton's purpose in *Paradise Lost* was 'to justify the ways of God to men. **Without some negative excess......of the soul**—*i. e.*, without some

damage to the religious spirit. It may be recalled here that the Restoration Court was a centre of licence and immorality **A fit prose was...soul**—*i.e.*, a fit prose could not emerge without chilling the poetic spirit. In the eighteenth century, as prose developed, poetry declined. **But an almost exclusive attention............poetry**—There was demand for prose in the eighteenth century. Men of letters cultivated the qualities, needed for prose, and these qualities are definiteness and accuracy of expression, reason, practical commonsense, and these go against poetry.

Paragraph 28. **For the purposes...admirable**—The poetry of Dryden and Pope is essentially the poetry of an age of prose and poetry ; it is poetry that approximates to prose. **But do you ask......benignity**—The poetry of Dryden and Pope has not the note of high seriousness, and lacks in the application of ideas to life ; it is of a narrow and restricted range, touching on the fringe of life and human affairs and treating of them again superficially. **Poetic application**—poetic application of ideas to life will achieve poetic beauty—it will be sincere, imaginative and impassioned.

Paragraph 29. **He has not...........of life**—Gray had the genuine poetic gift, but he could not fully develop it because he was born in an age of prose. Gray's poetic production was scanty, and his criticism of life was inadequate. **But he lived . . . . . manner**—Gray was a classical scholar, and was thoroughly permeated by the spirit and manner af Greek poets. **He had not the free . . . . them**—*i.e.*, he was hampered by the age in which he was born.

Paragraph 30. **Mark ruffian Violence**, *etc.*—from *On the Death of Robert Dundas, Esq, of Arniston.* **Clarinda's love-poet Sylvander**—from *Sylvander to Clarinda.* We may quote the, first stanza here as a specimen :

> When dear Clarinda, matchless fair,
> First struck Sylvander's raptur'd view,
> He gaz'd, he listened to despair,
> Alas ! It was all he dared to do.

It is artificial poetry like the poetry of the age of Drydan and Pope, **Gravel me to death**—make me feel extremely stiff or embarrassed very much. **Duncan Gray**—an old song, on the basis and to the tune of which Burns wrote a ballad (*Duncan Gray*), **I have been . . . . .stupid**—he refers to his poem *Inconstancy in Love*, written to the tune of *Duncan Gray*.

Paragraph 31. **Let us boldly. . . . . personal**—the best of Burns in his Scotch poems. A Scotchman loves and admires these poems. And Arnold says that there is the instance of a personal estimate. A Scotchman cannot help being personal in his estimate of Burns's poetry. Arnold evidently means that the Scotchman is blind to the faults of Burns's poetry. **Holy fair or Halloween**—both the poems are rich in local colour and deal with antique customs and rites and also popular superstition—Poems typical of the peasants of Scotland. *Halloween* has been described as a "masterpiece of humorous folklore." It is a noteworthy and notable poem, but Arnold does not seem to appreciate it. The realism of Burns offends Arnold. About *The Holy fair* Lockhart writes, "National customs were once more in the hands of a national poet. He mentions *Cotter's Saturday Night* below, which is also a picture of peasant life. Arnold says that it is not even a beautiful world that is presented in the poem. **No doubt a poet's criticism . . . . . lights us**—Burns interprets life, but sometimes it is touched with profound truth and passion, and then it becomes genuine poetry.

Paragraph 32 **Leeze me,** *etc.*—quoted from *The Holy Fair*, **Leeze me on drink**—my blessing on drink. **Gies**—gives. **Mair**—more. **Waukens lair**— wakens learning. **Pangs**—crams, **Fou o'**—fall of. **Penny wheep**—small beer. **Kittle**—tickle **Bacchanalian poetry**—drink song' Bacchus is the god of wine. **Bravado**—exaggerated boastfulness.

Paragraph 33. **For a that and a' that**—a poem of Burns, breathing the democratic sentiment. **Aboon**—above. **Guid**—good. **Mauna**—must not. **Fa'**—try. **The pith o'sense**—the inner core of good sense. **They**—*i.e.,* Burns's

countrymen. **The sacred lowe**—quoted from *Epistle to a Young Friend.* **Lowe**—flame. **Weel-placed**—legitimate. **Rove**—fleeting—passion. **Quantum**—weight or gravity. **It hardens . . . . . feeling**—it atrophies the heart within. **Who made the heart**—from *Poems addressed to the rigidly* righteous, Matthew Arnold admires these lines because they are charged with deep moral. **Balance**—*i.e*, of the judgment. **To make a happy fireside**—from *Epistle to Dr. Black lock.* **Weans**—children. **Xenophon**—His *Memorabilia* of Socrates, the great philosopher, is a valuable record of the practical philosophy of Socrates.

Paragraph 34. **In la sua . . . . . pace**—quoted from Dante. It means—in His will lies our peace.

Paragraph 35. **The Bridge of Abydones**—the heroi is Zuleika, daughter of Giaffer Pasha of Abydos. She is the trothplight bride of Giaffer Pasha of Abydoes. She is the trothplight bride of Selim ; but Giaffar shoots the lover, and Zuleika dies of a broken heart. **Had we never loved**—from *Parting Song to Clarinda.*

Paragraph 36. **Thou power Supreme**—from *Winter' a Dirge*, **Pathos of human nature**—as expressed in Burns's poem, *Auld Lane Syne*, **Of non-human nature**—as expressed in *Lines addressed to Mouse, To the Daisy.* **Tam o' Shanter**—Tam saw a hellish legion dancing in All away Kirk (near Ayr), and being excited cried out, "Weal done, Cutty Sark ;" Immediately the lights were extinguished. And, Tam rode for his life to reach the river Doon. He had himself passed the midstream, but his horse's tail had not reached that magic line, so Cutty Sark caught hold of it and pulled it off.

Think, ye may buy the joys e'r dear—
Remember Tam-o Shanter's mare.

The world of the Jolly Beggars—it is a scene of drinking and song, in which are introduced a broken soldier and a girl and other anomalous characters of the vagrant type and they make the most of their time by boozing and defy-

ing all canons of morality. **Auerbach's Cellar**—a wine cellar in leipzig in Goethe's Faust where a similar scene of a drunken bout takes place. **Goethe's Faust**—the basis of the legend is that, in return for twenty-four years of further life during which he is to have every pleasure and all knowledge at his command, Faust sells his soul to the devil, and the climax is reached when, at the close of the period, the devil claims him for his own. **Aristophanes**—the greatest of the Greek comic dramatists, noted for his satires of contemporary Greek life.

Paragraph 37. **Here, where his largeness................. result**—Burn's excellences as a poet lie in his free, generous outlook, in his penetrating insight, in his ironic wit and far-reaching pathos, and these qualities are revealed in such poems as *Lyrics Addressed to a Mouse*, *Duncan Gray*. *Tom Glen*, *Whistle and I'll come to you my lad*, *Auld Lang Syne*. **Spoudaiotes**—explained as 'high seriousness' by Arnold. **A poet......core**—Arnold denies to Burns the high seriousness of a classic, the profound criticism of life, but recognizes in him the high qualities of a poet bringing together and balancing truth of matter and truth of style. **We all of us ....Pathos**—pathos, so exquisitnly rendered by Burns, and coming so easy to him, attracts many readers. **Twa**—two. **Paild't**—paddled. **Burn**—small river. **Dine**—Dinner time. **Braid**—broad. It goes with *seas*. **Sin**—since. **Auld**—old. **Syne**—since. **But perhaps...............for us**—some of the shorter poems (lyries) of Burns are perfect in their form and matter, and he is to be valued for these excellent lyrics. **The votary...................Shelley**—some readers are attracted by the vague, elusive beauty of Shelley's fancies and dissolving music. **Many-coloured..........images**—*i*. e., the bewildering sucession of shimmering images and the melting melody of words. **"Pinnacled...........inane"**—quoted from Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, Arnold seems to depreciate Shelley. **No contact......soundest**—the corrective for the admirers of Shelley's poetry with its melting melody and iridescent imagery is to be acquainted with the lyries of Burns. **Minnie**—mother. **Deave**—deafen.

Paragraph 38. **Burning ground**—controversial region. **A sort of touchstone**—a measure and standard. **A collection like the present**—*The English Poets*, edited by T. Ward.

Paragraphs 39. **An era is opening.........literature**—refers to the Education Act of 1870 which brought literature within the reach of common people. **Currency and............ humanity**—compare : "The instinct for beauty is set in human nature as sure as the instinct of knowledge is set there or the instinct for conduct. If the instinct beauty is served Greek literature and art as it is served by no other literature and art, we may trust to the instinct of self-preservation in humanity for keeping Greek as part of our culture".—*Discourse on Sciene and Literature.*

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. 1. "We should conceive of poetry worthily, and more highly than it has been the custom to conceive of it."—M. Arnold. What does M. Arnold conceive to be the function of poetry ?

Ans. See *Critical Analysis.*

M. Arnold thinks very highly of the future of poetry. Mankind will turn more and more to poetry, for religious dogma and long-continued traditions are being challenged day by day and cannot be expected to yield any more sustenance to the human spirit. For poetry the idea is everything, and the idea generates emotion. It is necessary that our attitude to poetry should change, if it were to serve its real purpose. We do not take poetry as seriously as we should. Many think of poetry as a diversion for the moment. It is poetry that interprets life for us. Wordsworth calls poetry 'the breath and finer spirit of knowledge'. And that is the right approach to poetry. M. Arnold believes that poetry will one day replace what now passes with us for religion. Science too will appear to be incomplete without poetry. Poetry will humanize science. Religion and philosphy, such as they are, yield us no real knowledge and experience of life ; they are false shows of knowledg. Poetry brings us into intimate contact with life ; poetry is the interpretation of life.

If poetry is to serve its purpose, we must keep its standard high. There is poetry that may tickle our fancy,

and afford momentary diversion. We cannot think lightly of poetry and its function. Charlatanism can have a place in politics but none in poetry. It is charlatanism that blurs the distinction between excellent and inferior. In poetry the two should be kept strictly apart. It is excellent poetry that can yield us the pleasure and consolation that the human spirit seeks and needs for its sustenance. Poetry is a criticism of life in which poetic truth and poetic beauty are to be combined. In poetry fulfilling such conditions, mankind will find more and more consolation for its spirit. So it is the best poetry that we need for interpreting life to us, and revealing truth and beauty. The strength and joy that the human spirit seeks are to be found in such poetry.

To discover the best poetry, we should look to the primary and universal elements in human nature which poetry appeals to and nourishes. Hence, M. Arnold warns the reader against going by his personal taste, which he calls the personal estimate, and the valuation of poerty in reference to its age and its later influence, which he calls historical estimate. The real estimate of poetry will lead us to all that is excellent, valuable and enduring in poetry—a sound criticism of life. M. Arnold offers a practical suggestion for the real estimate. It is to have always in one's mind, lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry. By familiarizing ourselves with the best that has been thought and said in the world, we unconsciously evolve a standard of good poetry in our mind—and it becomes a sort of instinct with us. And when we learn to know and value what is good poetry, it will fulfil its function, and bring us into a close relation with life and its purpose and meaning and reveal to us truth and beauty. And,

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all,
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

It is good and excellent poetry that can be a sound criticism of life, and as such can fulfil its function rightly. And the excellence of poetry lies in its matter and substance as well as in its manner and style.

Q. 2. What are the three estimates, discussed by M. Arnold, and why are personal and historical estimates likely to divert us from excellent poetry?

Ans. See *Critical Analysis*.

Q. 3. Wherein lies the importance of Chaucer as a poet ? Why does M. Arnold deny that he is a great classic ?

Ans. Chaucer was nourished on the early poetry of France. He got words, rhyme, metre from this poetry. But his poetry is superior to French poetry, because it is so rich in substance and in texture. His large, free, simple, clear yet kindly view of human life marks all the distinction. The romance-poets of France, compared to Chaucer, live in a shadow-world. Their poetry has neither substance nor beauty of style. About the prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, Dryden remarked, "Here is God's plenty." The medieval world is pictured here in all its richness and variety—and it comes home to the reader. "He is a perpetual fountain of good sense." It is there that Chaucer is so immensely superior to the romance-poets of France. His humour, his human-heartedness, his tolerant view of life and its goings-on, his realistic approach distinguish him from his contemporaries in France and England. He is rightly called the Father of England Poetry. Arnold speaks of his divine liquidness of diction, his divine fludity of movement which is Chaucer's gift to subsequent English poets. His verse-melody is Chaucer's gift to subsequent English poets His verse-melody is further developed in Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats. His poetry too approaches his criticism of it in that it gives a large, free, sound representation of things. We may take a line like this:

O martyr souded in virginitee!

There is nothing like this in the French poetry of the time. Arnold says, "The virtue is such as we shall not find, perhaps, in all English poetry, outside the poets whom I have named as the special inheritors of Chaucer's tradition (*i.e*, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton. Keats). It is not true to say that Chaucer owes his melody of verse to his free, licentious use of the language. It is after all a gift of his own. He is a great poet because he combines the melody of verse with the truth or substance of life's experience.

Yet Chaucer is not a great classic. He is not as great a poet as Dante, Shakespeare or Milton. He lacks high seriousness, which Aristotle describes as one of the high attributes of poetry. This high seriousness is possessed by Dante and Shakespeare. Chaucer does not sound such a note as Dante does in the line '*In la sua volontade nostra pace*' (in his will our peace), or as Shakespeare does in the line '*Absent thee from felicity awhile*. Chaucer does not reach Dante's or Shakespeare's criticism of life. So Arnold says that Chaucer lacks the high seriousness of the great classics. He stands high above the early poets of France and his contemporaries in truth of substance and in an exquisite virtue of style. He is the founder of poetry. But he has not the English accent of the great classics.

Q. 4. Give Arnold's estimate of Burns.

Ans. See *Critical Analysis*.
